

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 404-19(2): THAIDENE NENE AND PROTECTED AREAS

October 22, 2020

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. GNWT progress on Thaidene Nene seems to have stalled. Meanwhile, on the federal side, Thaidene Nene staff have been going great guns, hiring monitors and a tourism coordinator, first-ever sport fishing system with Parks Canada. These are all welcome events. Then, of course, there was the signing of the agreement between the federal government and Yellowknives Dene First Nation on September 25th. Can the Minister explain why there are still no regulations for the establishment of the GNWT portion of Thaidene Nene and the wildlife conservation area? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to first of all thank the Member for continuing keeping us on our toes on this topic, and I greatly appreciate it. First of all, amendments to regulations for the Thaidene Nene should be completed by the end of 2021. However, what people need to know is EIA, plans, and natural resources department are working to finalize the process for engaging with inter-governmental councils and Indigenous governments and organizations on our legislative initiatives to ensure a consistent approach. ENR is preparing to engage on the Thaidene Nene and to Tuyeta territorial protected regulation developed using the interim inter-governmental council engagement process.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that information. Great that we're going to be working more collaboratively on regulations moving forward. I'll be back here in February asking more questions about Thaidene Nene. I'd like to ask the Minister, though, about progress on management boards for Thaidene Nene seems to be stalled, as well. Can the Minister tell us whether any of the relevant parties have made appointments, and if so, when and who?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: We're in the process of appointing the members for the Thaidene Nene operational management board. Once this process is completed, we're then looking at appointing to our regional management board, so we're in the process and it's getting close.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. Getting close counts in horseshoes but not in this Assembly. I understand that some of the parties have actually made appointments, they haven't been made public yet. I don't know what's going on, but that's what public registry is actually supposed to be doing. Can the Minister tell us, though, if there is a public seat on any of the Thaidene Nene management boards, and if so, how was recruitment carried out?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I agree that close is good in horseshoes, and we are getting really close. I have to say that we're getting close to having a ringer here, so that's a good thing. There is a seat on the operational management board for the Thaidene Nene that is appointed by the GNWT and Lutselk'e. However, there are no specific public seats on the operational management board. There is a government appointee for the regional management board that is to represent the public interest.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. This gets to one of the main points I want to make here is that there is a real scarcity of information on the so-called protected areas public registry. If we're recruiting somebody to sit as a public member, where is the public notice about it? I'll give the Minister another example: he extended the land withdrawal for the Dinaga Wek'ehodi protected area recently. That's not in the public registry, either. There's going to be a lot of correspondence from the management boards. That should be on the public registry. Can the Minister tell us when we can expect to see a real public registry for the *Protected Areas Act* and when will he get the resources to do it? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: There is a link to the land withdrawal for the Dinaga Wek'ehodi on the public registry. ENR is working to improve functionality of the protected areas registry. The work is scheduled to begin in January 2021. We expect that the new version of the protected area registry will be available next summer. In the meantime, ENR continues to keep the current protected areas registry up to date and compliance with section 9 of the *Protected Areas Act*. We are looking at how best to post board appointments information on the registry. We are trying to work within our guidelines and within our rules and work with the Indigenous governments to get this up and running.

We've heard from committee and we've heard from the Member that we need more money. We just need to do it right. Presently, we do have the money available to get the job done. It's just going to take some time, and we need to have the patience to do it. I'm more than willing to make a commitment here to meet with committee, meet with the MLA to have these conversations, and explain the process a little further and hear from the Member on how best we can get that registry up and running with what our rules are and what our responsibilities are. It is a bit of a challenge, and we are willing to work with the Member moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.