

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Whati Hydro Transmission Line
Committee of the Whole—2021-2022 Capital Budget Review
Dept. of Infrastructure—October 30, 2020

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to follow up on my colleague's questions, colleague from Monfwi, about the Whati transmission line. I raised a number of concerns with this project in the last Assembly in a rather hurried review of the capital budget that was carried out in one day in August of 2019. This kind of project just kind of came out of thin air. I'm just wondering: there was money appropriated in the 2020-2021 Capital Estimates for this project. Was any of it actually spent, and if so, how much? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The budget for this project was about \$33 million. I'm going to see if Mr. Jenkins has the amount that we have spent to date. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Jenkins.

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Minister mentioned, this project is included with our 10-year notional plan, notional at \$33 million. To date, funds have been carried over; none are spent. We are working with the Tlicho Government to advance this project, and we have started some consultations on the project and discussions on potential routing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. There was a lot of work done on mini-hydro for Whati using the Lac La Martre falls, very close to the community, and there was some preliminary work also done on mini-hydro for Gameti and Wekweeti, as well. As I understood from the information that I tabled in the last Assembly, you could probably do all three of those communities as mini-hydro for the same cost of this 60-kilometre over from Snare. Has the department looked at the relative costs of those three mini-hydro projects versus the Whati transmission line? Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm trying to find the answer here. I'm going to defer this to Mr. Jenkins.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Jenkins.

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The GNWT, we are working with the Tlicho Government to advance the Whati transmission line project. The development of this transmission line does not preclude the future development of the 13-megawatt hydro project on the La Martre river that could support future industrial development and electrification of the North Slave. We are also advancing a project, a community hydro project, to serve Gameti. There was hydrology information that has been collected over

the last few years. We need to look at that and confirm the hydro resource, have some more additional technical environmental work carried out, in partnership, of course, with the Tlicho Government and the community government, and then make decisions on that project moving forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I think we're jumping the gun here and including money for the Whati transmission line in the capital estimates when we haven't even made an application to the federal government yet, apparently, for this project. There hasn't been any analysis of the cost of a transmission line versus the cost of having three mini-hydro projects that could serve the three Tlicho communities. I just don't understand why this project is being pushed without that kind of analysis. Can the Minister commit to provide that analysis to this side of the House? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely. If the Member would like more detailed information on the project, that is something we can provide.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Great, yes. I really appreciate it, because it's my understanding that I think we could get mini-hydro projects that each community could actually control and have a self-sufficient energy future. At the same cost of building this big transmission line, they could become self-sufficient and control their own energy future. That's the kind of future I'm interested in, Madam Chair. Of course, that would need to be done in consultation with the Tlicho Government and all of the communities.