

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 561-19(2): WASTE WATER TESTING

February 12, 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Services about wastewater testing. First off, I want to commend the Minister and the department for their leadership in doing the wastewater testing. I think it's a really good early warning system that we have in place here for the capital and the regional centres. Unfortunately, though, I have asked several times, and some constituents have raised with me the fact that there is no way of finding out about the results of this wastewater testing. Can the Minister tell me or tell the public about the status of some kind of public reporting of the wastewater testing results? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member said, wastewater surveillances helped us to detect cases in three communities, and so it has proved a very effective system. At this point, the samples are sent to the National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg, so there is some lag in getting test results back. It's our hope that we will be able to invest in the Taiga lab here in Yellowknife to examine those wastewater samples and provide more timely responses on them. That said, I am not aware that the dashboard has been set up or that it will be set up until that new system is in place. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. Look, as I said before, this is a great system, and I really do truly appreciate the work that has gone into setting it up. I'm just wondering, though, in the dashboard, could we have something like the presence or absence of COVID and whether the levels are constant, increasing, or decreasing, and the dates of the tests? Is that the kind of information that could be put on the dashboard when it's available?

HON. JULIE GREEN: I would have to inquire about the level of detail that is being contemplated for the dashboard. I think that we would want to have the dashboard launched with some public education about how to interpret the results so that the results don't create panic in communities that are being reported on. Certainly, I am willing to inquire about what the dashboard is going to look like.