

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 595-19(2): TOILET FACILITIES ON HIGHWAY NO. 1 AND HIGHWAY NO. 3

February 25, 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to follow-up with some questions about outhouse facilities between the border and Yellowknife because I've had the displeasure of using some of those back in January myself, coming back. I don't want to get into all the dirty details here, Mr. Speaker. Look, I raised this five years ago in the house with the previous Minister of ITI. Photographs were shared from other members of the public, and it was very distressing to see this. I see from the COVID-19 statistics report that, peak periods, there's 1,200 vehicles going through every two weeks. Having these facilities cleaned out once every two weeks is just not going to cut it, Mr. Speaker. What is the Minister prepared to do about this now? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, when we prepare for session, when you prepare through the year, this is something that I had flagged even before we came into session. It is something that the deputy minister of ITI, deputy minister of Infrastructure are already working on together. They know it is an issue. As I've said earlier, I was not here five years ago, and I certainly didn't have the awareness that this became an issue. It is an issue. It happens every year. It happened every year, every time the facilities freeze up. The Wayside Parks fall under ITI. The roadside pullouts fall under Infrastructure. Yet, between the two, I fully acknowledge that we come here every year and face this issue.

The two departments are now working together. The two departments have just been told, thanks to the questions asked earlier, that I expect a plan. I expect that my colleague is likely going to feel the same, lest she have to stand and answer the same series of questions. Between the two departments, we're going to come out with a plan together so that we don't have to come back year over year. I realize doing this every two weeks is difficult and arguably not enough, not sufficient, but let's figure out what is sufficient, what is the problem, where are the issues. I don't have that information. Is it every single facility? Is it the Infrastructure facilities? Is it the ITI facilities? Is it used because of COVID? Is it increased use or reduced use with COVID? I don't have that information. We are going to get it. We are going to have a plan. We are not going to be answering questions next year during budget session about outhouses, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: I just want to quote something from Hansard, June 2, 2020. Gee, that's a little over a year ago. Me saying this in the House, Mr. Speaker: "If the Minister digs down into her pile from the previous Assembly, she will see that there were a number of complaints about the 60th parallel outhouse in particular. I don't know what it was like this spring, but there were photos sent to me. They were shared with the previous ITI

Minister. The Minister made a commitment to try to improve the cleaning regimen, so I don't know whatever happened, but if the Minister digs down far enough in her pile, she'll find all of that in files with her department, I'm sure." That was more than a year ago with a previous Minister. This has been flagged a number of times in this House. Why can't the Minister just amend the contract and double the cleaning regimen so that it's at least done once a week right now?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I'm not going to double a contract on the floor of the House. That's not an appropriate way to solve this problem, but I am going to solve this problem because it is a year-over-year problem. I completely agree. I am happy to be put in my place and on my heels on this one. That's fine. I have committed to coming up with a plan. I am committing to coming up with a solution, whether it is because we have increased cleaning regimes, whether it's because we have increased monitoring of the various facilities, whether it's both. I'm not sure. If it's just the 60th parallel, that's easier. Those are the kinds of things that I need to have information about, so we can make a targeted and quick assessment and solve the problem immediately.