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Mining-Oil & Gas Industries Staffing and Support
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MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to continue on the line of my colleague about staff that we have that are dedicated to oil and gas. Look, I know some of these people. They are hardworking. The reality is: there hasn't been any exploration, seismic drilling, since devolution, seven years ago. I'm not quite sure what everybody does, but yesterday, we heard about OROGO having a third-party assessment done of their resource needs. Is that something that the Minister is prepared to look at in terms of the oil and gas function within ITI, having a third-party assessment to look at resourcing? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are no plans right now to have any sort of extra assessment around the need for this unit right at the moment. However, what we are fairly confident in is that, while there may not have been a lot of oil and gas exploration, there continues to be a very large amount of interest in LNG production, distribution, marketing, et cetera, across the Northwest Territories. There is a lot of activity in the Delta, but there is activity in the South Slave, as well, interested in it both at a small scale and a large scale.

There is certainly that aspect of it, in addition to which there is monitoring that has to be undertaken with respect to the petroleum, land tenure system, and various other holder responsibilities. There is, again, monitoring that happens at the existing tenures. There still is a fair bit of work that goes on, and as the deputy minister already said, there are efforts to reprofile or shift. That it's not singularly for oil and gas, but that it's looking at mineral resources, as well, in the regions. Again, there is no need to worry that these folks won't be kept busy. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. That's kind of what I expected here. The tenure system should actually be rolled into the Department of Lands. They are the ones that already do the surface. It creates a conflict when you have a department that's trying to promote the resource and then trying to manage the rights at the same time. I have made that suggestion before, but I expect it's kind of like water off a duck's back. While we are on the subject of ducks, I want to turn over to page 216, the contributions page here. I have been here for five years, and once again, there is core funding for the NWT Chamber of Mines listed here. It actually increases from \$30,000 to \$55,000, which is an 83 percent increase. Can someone explain to me the increase in this core funding? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is project-based funding. I would like to suggest I can direct that to the deputy minister to describe the changes in programming.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy Minister Strand.

MS. STRAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, on an annual basis, we work on projects with the Chamber of Mines. You can see that in some years, like 2019-2020, the numbers were actually higher. These are estimates. We have different events at different conferences that the Chamber co-hosts with us; public awareness and outreach projects, such as their Mining North Works. They have helped with the delivery of prospecting programs. Every year, it changes, and all I can say is that, this year, we are working on more profile for their Mining North Works, which is a great program that is in the schools in Nunavut. We are looking to see what is in the realm of possible in the territories. Also, we meet with the chamber every two weeks in a working group. We are working on our competitiveness. We are looking at actions. They are contributing to the critical metals action plan. There is a lot of good work. It's intensive, and as Minister said, it's not core funding. It's project-by-project basis. It's ongoing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. If it walks like a duck, talks like a duck, smells like a duck, it is a duck. This is core funding. Look, I'm sure that meeting every two weeks with the chamber is great. I wish that all NGOs had that kind of access to our departments. That's really great, but I don't see a similar sort of increase for other NGOs that get core funding. I am just going to leave that there for now, Madam Chair. I want to go over to the line item on 215, which is Mineral and Petroleum Resources Act implementation. The Minister, in her opening remarks, talked about how there is \$360,000 for this work, but the line item here actually shows \$587,000. Can I get an explanation as to the discrepancy? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of ITI.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I suggest this might go to our director of finance, Ms. Salvador, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Ms. Salvador.

MS. SALVADOR: Thank you, Madam Chair. The \$587,000 is actually a reallocated budget of \$231,000 from our mineral and petroleum resources division to this new division. It includes our director position salary. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. That's interesting that, not only has this new division been created and we have money to help pay for studies and so on, but they have actually reallocated staff now to do this work. I agree with my colleague from Yellowknife North that this is interesting and shows the importance of mining and oil and

gas to this department and, perhaps, Cabinet as a whole. I don't see other departments doing this kind of thing. Environment and Natural Resources, Lands, they have a lot of work to do in terms of regulation development and implementation of the Public Land Act, development of regulations, Protected Areas Act, those kinds of things. Can the Minister explain what the secret is here to get extra money to do this work? Maybe she can share that with her colleagues on the other side. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am obviously not here to defend the structure and organization of every other department. I would think it should be a good thing that a department is able to reallocate funds from within or reallocate staff from within rather than constantly having to create new positions.

Madam Chair, this is a major piece of legislation. It is one that was implemented at the end of the last Assembly but is waiting on its regulations. I have many times heard it said that, in fact, notwithstanding how big the act is, it is, in fact, the regulations; everyone is waiting to see how they unfold. It is a piece of legislation that we are committed, with the IGC, to go out to fairly intensive consultations with Indigenous governments. That is part of the devolution agreement and the agreements that we have now. This is an opportunity to really fundamentally change one of the anchor industries, or the anchor industry, in the Northwest Territories. I am not going to be defensive about it. I think it's a good thing, Madam Chair. I think people are excited about it. The industry is excited about it. The indirect industries that benefit, I think, should be excited about it. To the extent that it's a good thing, all I can say is that I can go and talk to the other Ministers and see how they plan to get their legislations rolling. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate that response. Is there a publicly available plan or schedule or anything to do this work? I have yet to see that, and I am as anxious as the Minister to get some of this work done. I am not aware of any public plans or schedules to do this. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. We were really just waiting for the IGC process, the intergovernmental council process, to be concluded with the protocol there. With that done, I will commit to getting a full outline of our expected timeline on this to the Member. Thank you.