

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 220-18(2): INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ABORIGINAL GOVERNMENTS

June 14, 2016

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations. Regular Members have received some information on the Premier and Executive Council's meeting with our various Aboriginal Government partners, but it seems we're also forced to rely on public media releases to learn of some apparently major developments. I'll first refer to the Executive's media release of April 26th which says that, "in meetings with the Tlicho Government the topic of, 'establishing a joint working group on housing,' was discussed." Housing is one the foremost priorities of this 18th Assembly and a huge element of our mandate, so can the Minister tell us what those talks were about? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have intergovernmental MOU with the Tlicho Government and as part of the formal arrangement we meet on a semi-annual basis with the Tlicho leadership and they raise issues of importance to them and we raise issues of importance to us. And I believe in those discussions that the Tlicho wanted more presence of the government of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation in their communities and they wanted to work much more closely together in the riding and looking after the housing needs of the Tlicho and they suggested that we could possibly look at having some sort of a joint partnership in doing so. We're very open to exploring all possibilities of improving the effectiveness of the efficiencies of this transparent Government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi to the Minister for that answer. I'll turn to the Executive Department's media release of the same date on a meeting with the Northwest Territories Metis Nation which contains reference to discussions on the Taltson Dam and on taxation and on, "negotiation issues such a generalized interest and early land transfer. Again, developments on topics that are news to me. Could the Minister please give us a few highlights on those discussions? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: For the benefit of the Member, the discussions with regards to Taltson Dam have been going on for at least three of four Assemblies and certainly there has been discussions about expanding the Taltson Dam in partnership with Aboriginal Governments and we went to bring the power to the diamond mines and the diamond mines would buy the power and it went as far as going for environmental assessment and part of the recommendations was to work more closely with the Akaticho Government with regards to crossing some portions of land that was being negotiated and that has been stalled from there on and there's certainly significant interest by the NWT Metis Nation to see additional work undertaken in that area.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for the response. Then there's the April 20th Executive Department media release on meetings with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. I was particularly intrigued by the reference in that release to, "offshore revenue negotiations." Could the Minister give us a brief overview of what this refers to?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you. As the Member may know, the offshore in the Beaufort has very significant resource potential in the area of oil and gas and this is an area that has been identified for negotiation. It was part of the oil and gas negotiations of devolution. There as a

trigger in the Devolution Agreement that six months after devolution came into place that the trigger would be pulled so that negotiations could start with the Government of Canada for management of the offshore in the Beaufort and also collection of royalties and the whole regulatory process. We have indicated in conjunction with the Inuvialuit, the Inuvialuit have had land claims for over 30 years and joint management of the Beaufort has been a very important priority for the Inuvialuit and they want to get on with it. We want to get on with it. We think at this juncture where there is no oil and gas activity going on in the Beaufort and very little likelihood of it returning in the near future that this is a good time to do those negotiations and get it done.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. So despite the top down answers, we concede that these are all quite significant matters in which all Caucus Members would genuinely have an interest. The guiding principles in consensus government in the NWT by which we are all bound says under Principle Five: "Except under extraordinary circumstances, Members of the Legislative Assembly should be made aware and have opportunity to discuss significant announcements, changes, consultations or initiatives before they are released to the public or introduced in the Legislative Assembly." Can the Minister tell us why the input of all Caucus Members was not sought on these significant matters and whether he will commit to seeking the direction of Caucus prior to future consultations with our Aboriginal Government partners? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: These are matters that are raised by Aboriginal Governments in their own right and when they raise it at the meetings we can't take the time to say, well, we're going to go back and check with all 19 Members before we can have this discussion, but we do have bodies. Like I said, every one of the instances the Member referred to is part of longstanding discussions and negotiations.