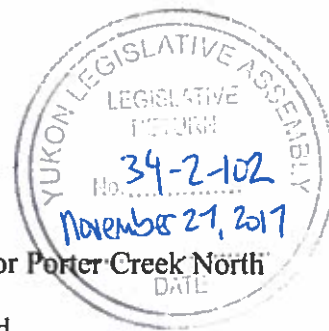


LEGISLATIVE RETURN

SUBMITTED BY: Hon. Jeanie Dendys



1. On November 23, 2017, Geraldine Van Bibber, Member for Porter Creek North
- asked the following question during the Oral Question Period
at page(s) _____ of *Hansard*
- submitted the following written question – WQ No. _____
- gave notice of the following motion for the production of papers – MPP No. _____

RE: Erosion along the Riverbank at Fort Selkirk

OR

2. This legislative return relates to a matter outstanding from discussion related to:

on _____ at page(s) _____ of *Hansard*.

The response is as follows:

Please see attached response.

November 27, 2017
Date


Signature

Question:

Ms. Van Bibber: Now to something completely different. The riverbank at Fort Selkirk is eroding and deteriorating and each year it yields a little more to the Yukon River. Obviously the site is historic and an important part of our history in Yukon and especially to the Selkirk First Nation. If something isn't done in the next few years, this site will be severely at risk.

I'm wondering if the minister could tell us what work is being done to stop the erosion along the riverbank at Fort Selkirk.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you for the question. There are a number of historic sites throughout Yukon that are experiencing changes in climate and changes in river patterns. We have certainly seen it in other places. I was in Herschel Island recently where we watched huge metres of the banks just slough away. We know that this is an area for sure that we need to be mitigating. I was just at the federal-provincial-territorial ministers meeting this summer. We talked about how to mitigate these risks to historic sites. We have a very dedicated team of people working diligently on finding ways to mitigate.

I will get specific answers for your question and get back to you in a legislative return.

Answer:

Fort Selkirk is part of the homeland of the Selkirk First Nation and a place for spiritual and cultural renewal. For others, it is a cherished reminder of the past, a rare glimpse into the First Nation way of life, and a look at the history of trade and settlement in the North.

Fort Selkirk is located on the west bank of the Yukon River downstream from the mouth of the Pelly River. It features archaeological evidence of late prehistoric use, thirty-seven standing structures, cemeteries and artifacts dating from 1852.

Fort Selkirk is co-owned and co-managed by Selkirk First Nation and Yukon government as per the Selkirk First Nation Final Agreement. The site has been actively preserved since the early 1980s. Selkirk First Nation and Yukon governments invest more than \$200,000 each year to preserve and maintain the site.

Fort Selkirk illustrates the unique combination of different cultures and environment that has helped form the social, economic and political fabric of the

territory. The site is of significant importance to Selkirk First Nation as well as other First Nations and Yukoners whose families lived there.

The 2013 spring river break-up caused major erosion along the riverbank at Fort Selkirk. The schoolhouse was moved back 10 metres to protect it temporarily until it is determined if further protection is needed.

The department hired a local engineering firm to present options to protect the site and to determine if the bank needs to be stabilized against future events.

The engineering report issued in 2014 identified river ice jamming downstream of the site and fluctuations in water level during spring break-up as the primary cause of bank erosion. The report outlined two options for bank protection, both of these options would have a significant visual impact on the riverbank, a character defining element of Fort Selkirk.

The 2014 report also recommended further study. The Historic Sites Unit has been collecting bank erosion data since 2012. Spring break-up was monitored using time-lapse cameras in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Erosion monitoring indicates that minimal erosion has occurred since 2013 and that the site is not currently at risk.

Historic Sites Unit staff continue to monitor the situation closely and will take appropriate steps to ensure the protection of the site if necessary.