

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING REGULATORY SYSTEM

October 20, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The former Member for Wiiledeh asked about emissions, fluids and inspections at the hydraulic fracturing operations carried out by ConocoPhillips in 2014. There was a secrecy ban on the release of some information at that time. I asked again about it on the understanding that the secrecy period had ended. I will leave alone the issue of which Minister is actually responsible for the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas, as that one looks like a hot potato. Let's focus on what was said in the Premier's September the 28th response: "Only 28 per cent of the load fracking fluid was recovered from the Dodo Canyon well and 24.5 per cent from the Mirror Lake well." I guess the rest is still down there somewhere. Is this the best we can do at recovering this stuff that is injected into our groundwater?

Next, the Premier says that the volumes in composition of the fracking fluids are found on a website called fracfocus.ca. When I looked at the website and the reports for these wells, I found that some of that data may be confidential "business information," and that the totals "may not equal 100 per cent due to the redaction of proprietary components." This doesn't leave me very comfortable that we actually know what is going into the ground or its possible effects.

Next, the Premier discusses that the wells were monitored by the company while in operation and inspected by OROGO. Unlike our land and water co-management system I can't find these inspection reports in the OROGO public registry on its website. After the company closed the wells, there is no monitoring done, and apparently OROGO has recently launched a voluntary monitoring program relying on local land users. This doesn't sound like a well thought out strategy where these wells become public liabilities. This is not consistent with a principle of polluter pays. In Alberta, there's an abandoned wells fund paid for by industry.

The company's surface and groundwater monitoring reports for hydraulic fracturing are apparently filed with the Sahtu Land Water Board. Finally, monitoring and inspections of these activities is carried out by Environment and Natural Resources, but I can't find any evidence from the Sahtu Land and Water Board that anyone from GNWT actually reviews and comments on these reports for any potential problems.

In conclusion, what this response to my written questions shows is a convoluted regulatory system for oil and gas, a lack of transparency, and the failure to ensure that we are not creating liabilities for future generations. This is not why we got devolution. I will ask questions later today for the Premier or whoever's in charge of oil and gas these days. Merci, Monsieur le President.