

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

ATTENDANCE AT VANCOUVER MINING CONFERENCE

February 1, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi. Earlier today, we heard our Finance Minister deliver messages of austerity and fiscal restraint, and a further 65 positions are being cut by this Cabinet. Let's talk about this trip to Vancouver. It's on the mind of many of my constituents, our residents without housing or jobs, taxpayers, and more public servants about to lose their jobs. I was as flabbergasted as anyone when I woke last week to learn that our entire Cabinet had decided to go en masse to balmy British Columbia for a mining conference, literally the week before announcing further austerity and job cuts.

I had to wait for the media to fill in the details, and learn that in addition to the full Cabinet, no less than 24 other government officials were along for the ride for a total of 32 at an estimated cost of \$75,000. That money could have been used to save one of the jobs you are cutting in the budget. To start index income assistance payments, or many other better uses.

This all sounds pretty harsh. It should. The utter contempt for the discipline of austerity and for the prudent stewardship of public funds makes us all look bad. This is why citizens have come to believe that politicians are self-serving, interested only in their own luxury and pomp.

The Vancouver trip also reveals a lot about our government and its efforts, or lack thereof, of economic diversification. Our over-dependence on mining is only perpetuated by having all of Cabinet participate in such an event. Can we expect all of Cabinet to attend conferences on agriculture? Renewable energy? Tourism? And other sectors of our economy that continue to grow, make us more self-sufficient and create local and sustainable jobs? Why doesn't all of Cabinet attend the anti-poverty roundtable meetings?

While mining is definitely an important part of our economy, it is clearly unsustainable and brings its own set of negative impacts. All of Cabinet going to this event is the clearest demonstration of how much influence the mining industry has on our government, our policies, laws, and spending.