

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

ROLE OF REGULAR MEMBERS IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

February 14, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, monsieur le President. Regular MLAs have become accustomed to the lack of consultation around this government's engagement with the federal government. Examples of this include:

- no consultation prior to signing the Pan Canadian Framework on Climate Change;
- no input into the NWT position before signing off on a 10-year health accord that means less than the original offer;
- no consultation on priorities taken to Ottawa during a week-long entire cabinet visit on climate change priorities; and
- very few meetings of Regular MLAs with federal Ministers during visits to the Northwest Territories.

I will look at just one of these examples of Cabinet's inability or unwillingness to work with Regular MLAs. All of Cabinet went to Ottawa November 21-24 last year. No representative of standing committees was invited to attend. We found out about this trip just five days before the trip while some of us were at the Geoscience Forum: we were sent an e-mail with a letter informing us that the three priorities to be pitched were as follows:

- expanding and joining the Talston system to southern grids;
- renewable solutions for off-grid communities; and
- all-weather roads for adapting to climate impacts.

None of these projects will deal in a significant way with greenhouse gas emissions from the Northwest Territories, where 24 per cent of emissions are from non-renewable resource development. Replacing diesel in communities is definitely a good thing and will help reduce the cost of living, but this is a relatively small portion of emissions. In any event, a better priority would have been a major housing retrofit program that would put people to work in their own communities, reduce the cost of living, and improve our housing stock.

While criticizing Cabinet for not working with Regular MLAs on federal engagement, I do have solutions, Mr. Speaker. The following would be a good start:

- rather than just giving Regular MLAs notice of upcoming meetings with federal Ministers, ask committees what issues and positions should be put forward;

- regular reporting on meetings with federal Ministers and any results that would be helpful; I thank the Premier for his Minister's Statement this morning, earlier today, on his meeting with the Prime Minister;
- recommend and help arrange for federal Ministers to meet with Regular MLAs, possibly through relevant standing committees; and
- consult with Regular MLAs on GNWT negotiating positions before final sign-off on federal, provincial, territorial agreements.

I will have questions for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations to seek commitments on working better with Regular MLAs on federal engagement. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.