

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE
PREMIER'S RED ALERT ON ECONOMIC FUTURE OF THE NWT
February 7, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Without consulting Regular MLAs, the Premier went to Ottawa in October to launch his so-called Red Alert to complain about federal colonialism and interference in resource extraction.

Many constituents and others contacted me expressing concern and disagreement with the Premier's negative and divisive statements. Almost every regional Indigenous government responded with their own concerns about lack of consultation on the Red Alert.

If there is to be a debate about the future of the NWT, and I believe there should be, it needs to start here in the Northwest Territories, not in Ottawa, not in Vancouver. It must also provide Northerners with an opportunity to have their voices heard.

The Red Alert diverts attention from poor leadership and lack of progress on this Assembly's mandate. The current Assembly has passed almost no substantial legislation. We haven't changed a word of the mirrored devolution legislation passed in early 2014, and no new land rights agreements have been negotiated.

The Red Alert arises from the Premier's outrage with the federal five-year moratorium on Beaufort offshore rights issuances. There has been no exploration in the Beaufort for years, and even the Mackenzie Gas Project is now dead. The Premier himself proclaimed the death of oil and gas due to low commodity prices during his 2015 re-election campaign.

Given the imperatives of climate change and advances in renewable energy, it is highly doubtful there will be a resurgence of fossil fuel development in the Northwest Territories.

The Premier also drew erroneous conclusions about the amount of NWT lands protected and over-emphasized the contribution of resource extraction to the NWT economy. He later had to correct these alternative facts when questioned by the media and by myself.

With a different federal government, change is possible, and real partnership opportunities exist for the North. We need leadership with ideas for a vibrant and diversified economy that distributes wealth more equitably and sustainably, to move us beyond an export-based, externally controlled future.

That is the kind of leadership and collaboration that many NWT residents expect of our Premier and Cabinet. I challenge the Premier to begin the debate on the future of the Northwest Territories here on the floor of this Assembly, to develop a new vision for a diversified and sustainable economy. Mahsi Mr. Speaker.