

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

MINISTERIAL MEETINGS TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

February 22, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. This government was committed to being more transparent and accountable. One of the elements of this accountability is the public engagement and transparency portal, which includes a registry showing the meetings of Cabinet Ministers with a variety of outside individuals and organizations. There are a lot of entries in these listings giving dates, times, and names. You can deduce a lot about the priorities and interests that appear to influence our Cabinet. In the end, the lack of real information on the subjects of meetings doesn't do a lot to create transparency.

Consider the listings for the Premier. Based upon the entries in the registry from January 1, 2017, to January 30, 2018, the Premier would appear to have had 23 meetings with businesspeople, including four meetings with mining companies and six meetings with oil and gas interests. There are no meetings listed with civil society, such as environmental or social justice organizations.

During the period of the January 2017 Association for Mineral Exploration round-up in Vancouver, the registry shows one meeting on one day with the Mineral Exploration Roundup chairs and no meetings with individual mining firms. I thought one-on-one meetings were the point of going to Vancouver. There are also a variety of meetings with what appear to be foreign government trade representatives, often in the company of foreign companies themselves, and there are listings of meetings with business representatives which are not listed as business meetings. Identification of meetings under the loose categories "telephone call," "interest group and associations," or "other" doesn't tell you a lot in most cases.

What is really missing is any indication of the general nature of the discussion. When Northwestel meets with the Premier, is it discussion on the improvement of service, use of fibre optic lines, taxation policy, or what? In the three meetings with Dominion Diamonds, was the subject specific to the Ekati Mine, input on the Mineral Resources Act, or something else?

This registry improved when it went online and became searchable. It's a good starting contribution to the transparency this government says it is striving to achieve, but more progress needs to be made. I'll have questions for the Minister responsible for Public Engagement and Transparency later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.