

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

ARCTIC ENERGY ALLIANCE FUNDING SHORTFALL

March 1, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. With the approach of spring, another annual tradition is upon us: Arctic Energy Alliance has run out money to fund popular and progressive programs that help our residents reduce their energy costs and cut greenhouse gas production.

According to a message posted to the alliance website on January 24th, the Energy Efficiency Incentive Program has been fully subscribed for the 2017-2018 fiscal year and rebates are no longer available. The notice tells people that, if they have purchased an eligible product, they can still go onto a waiting list, but that waiting list is not carried forward into the new fiscal year. Also this year, the alliance is fully subscribed across its programs, so no internal reallocations are possible. I have had at least three Yellowknife residents contact me regarding the lack of alliance funding for 2017-2018, some after they had already made investments in energy conservation, only to discover that no funding was available, partly due to poor communications.

Regular MLAs in this Assembly have consistently pleaded with Cabinet to increase alliance funding but to no avail. The draft energy strategy makes no promises about increased alliance funding other than a vague commitment to enhance and review alliance programs. It is not clear whether the GNWT is seeking any additional federal funding to increase the alliance's budget and programs.

We cannot wait for federal dollars to rain from heaven. We need to get ready now. The Minister tells me that a comprehensive review of alliance programs is now in its final stages and recommendations are expected for improvements to enhance its effectiveness. One key need is to align the design and delivery of improved programming with the priorities and actions of the new energy strategy, especially if it is improved, as I recommended earlier this week in the House.

Before we leave this fiscal year, though, I wonder whether there may still be an opportunity to assist with those who have been placed on the waiting list. As we get close to the end of the fiscal year, are there any surplus funds within the Department of Infrastructure that can be re-profiled into the alliance? Also in the expectation of increased federal funding, I would also like to see the current waiting list of application approvals carried over into and funded with 2018-2019 funds. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure on improving funding to the Arctic Energy Alliance later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.