

## MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

### BATHURST CARIBOU HERD

March 6, 2018

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. An important paper was published last week on caribou, focusing on the Bathurst caribou herd. I tabled this peer-reviewed paper in the House on March 1<sup>st</sup>. The author say the following:

"As caribou populations have declined in recent years, the governance response has almost exclusively focused on curbing Indigenous subsistence harvesting. We offer the case of the Bathurst caribou herd, where key areas of the summer and fall range have been taken up for mining exploration and development in the last two decades. The tragedy, both ecological and socio-economic, mirrors historic periods of wildlife management in northern Canada during which time caribou management was explicitly about advancing private interests in northern lands and resources at the expense of Indigenous cultures and livelihoods.

"There are other threats for the Bathurst caribou herd on the horizon as new mining projects are proposed, including an all-weather road and deep-water port project that would significantly adversely affect caribou habitat, including areas considered sensitive calving grounds. Even for skeptics and cautious scientists who consider the evidence about the impacts of mining on caribou habitat and population dynamics as incomplete, taking a precautionary approach to limit development, particularly in the Bathurst range, would seem a prudent course of action."

That's the end of the quote, Mr. Speaker. What has been the response of our government to the crisis with the Bathurst caribou herd? A herd range-planning exercise has been going on, led by Environment Natural Resources for the last four years. The draft plan is now for public consultation, which closes on March 31, 2018.

The draft plan presents a conceptual way forward for managing humans in relation to the caribou herd. However, the implementation section is particularly weak, with no concrete set of actions or commitments by governments on either side of the NWT-Nunavut boundary. No costs are predicted.

There is also an ominous disclaimer that says, "The document does not represent the results of community consultation or government policy direction." The draft also states, "The range plan is advisory, and all recommendations are non-binding."

Our government needs to decide whether it wants to commit to protecting the Bathurst caribou herd with other governments or if it wants to build an all-weather road through the heart of its range. It's a simple choice, Mr. Speaker: caribou or roads.

I'll have questions for the Minister of Environmental and Natural Resources later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.