

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

SLAVE GEOLOGICAL PROVINCE ROAD

May 25, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, monsieur le President. It seems that we have a "roads" theme day here today. My message is going to be a little bit different.

This April, the federal government denied GNWT's funding application for its National Trade Corridors Fund towards the construction of the Slave Geological Province Road. This is a proposal to turn the current winter road to the diamond mines into an all-weather corridor and join it with the proposed Grays Bay Road and Port Project to Nunavut's Arctic coast.

Nunavut's proposal for the Grays Bay Road and Port Project was similarly denied, and the Nunavut government quickly pulled out of that project on April 14, and then the Qikiqtani Inuit Association requested that the environmental review of it be suspended on May 2, a request which was accepted two days later. Now that this project has been shelved indefinitely, it is time that our government did the same thing with the Slave Geological Province Road and focus on other infrastructure.

A business case has yet to be completed, and there has been no independent analysis of the costs and benefits of the Slave Geological Province Road. Quite simply, our government doesn't have the fiscal capacity to build this \$540 million road with our limited borrowing capacity, even if the federal government was to make a substantial contribution. Our government should stop raising unrealistic expectations that this project can be started within the mandate of the 18th Assembly.

On the environmental side, there is no approved range plan, management plan, or recovery strategy for the Bathurst caribou herd or a legally binding land use plan for this region. No additional funds to implement any of these initiatives were included in the 2018-2019 Main Estimates.

Until this work is completed, funded, and implemented with a documented rebound in the health of the Bathurst caribou herd, an all-weather road into the Slave Geological Province, especially a publicly funded road, would not be in the public interest. If we want caribou and the food security, tourism, and other ecological and cultural benefits that caribou bring, we cannot have an all-weather road into the heart of their range.

I will have questions later today on why Cabinet continues to pursue the Slave Geological Province Road when there is no economic case for it, no fiscal capacity to build it, and no plan to protect caribou. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.