

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ECONOMIC SYMPOSIUM

October 12, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Back in February, the Premier made a statement about the Arctic Policy Framework that included a reference to a northern summit on economic development. When I questioned the Premier on this initiative on March 1st, he said the "purpose of the summit is to seek input into the writing of the NWT chapter of the Arctic Policy Framework" and that it would likely be held within the next couple of months. The Premier further stated that we would be "paying for experts in different economic sectors to participate." The Premier said, "We are realizing that to diversify our economy is not as easy as it looks or sounds. We need input from every sector or every possible source so that we can come up with a plan that will work. Just relying on our traditional sources to come up with a vision and a new economic diversification is not as easy as it sounds. We want to be as inclusive as possible."

When asked if Regular MLAs would be allowed to participate, the Premier said, "We would be pleased to discuss it with committees certainly," but that "our experience has been that sometimes it affects the input from people who are there, but, certainly, I have no problem with it. We should at least have a discussion on it."

The first notice that Regular MLAs received of this event that was held October 1st to 3rd came via the weekly media advisory on Ministerial activities on September 24th. The same day, I asked the Premier for an agenda and a participant list. That was finally provided three days later, after I raised the request a second time. Sorry, I can't share the agenda or participant list because, believe it or not, the guest list for this consultation is confidential. I can confirm that the focus appears to have been largely related to non-renewable resource development. Happily, the communique issued on October 4th from the symposium seems to take a more balanced approach but was again made without any input from this side of the House.

I will have questions for the Premier about the NWT Economic Symposium and what happened with the commitments he made in this House to make this event inclusive, balanced, and collaborative. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.