

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING PRIORITIES

October 23, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Back in March, the Minister of Infrastructure announced the signing of an Integrated Bilateral Agreement for federal Infrastructure Funds. The 10-year Investing in Canada Plan would see \$761 million spent in the Northwest Territories. There are apparently more federal infrastructure program announcements to come. My concern is how projects are selected and how submissions are made by Cabinet. Regular MLAs have little, if any, input in how the priorities or submissions are determined.

Data on the Infrastructure Canada website shows that each of the three territories has received between \$845 and \$981 million since 2002. The territories' spending priorities are obviously different, but 79 per cent of our allocation has been used for highways and roads, which compares to 58 per cent in the Yukon and less than 4 per cent for Nunavut. Nunavut has used 4 per cent of its funding for affordable and temporary housing. None of the NWT federal infrastructure funds appear to have been used to house our people.

Nunavut also recently announced that it would receive \$12 million under the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund for energy retrofits to 1,000 homes in Nunavut. My understanding is that GNWT asked for \$4 million for our housing needs.

While the federal government sets parameters to determine the form of infrastructure funds and programs, what is clear is the lack of transparency, specific criteria, and analysis undertaken by our government in determining what projects they submit. I characterize this approach as "big toys for big boys," where the focus is on roads to resources and large infrastructure replacement rather than job creation, greenhouse gas reductions, and investment in social infrastructure such as housing, culture, and tourism. We can't even get spare change for a sorely needed Yellowknife visitors' centre.

On the same day that Nunavut announced its significant investment of \$12 million for housing energy retrofits, our Minister of Infrastructure appeared before a Senate committee to ask about GNWT's priorities, Taltson hydro expansion, Tlicho all-season road, Mackenzie Valley Highway, and Slave Geological Province Access Corridor. Noticeably absent was any mention of social infrastructure.

I look forward to asking the Minister later today on how we can make infrastructure decisions and submissions more balanced, transparent, and collaborative. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.