

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CARBON PRICING

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MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. The recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says we are already seeing the consequences of a 1-degree Celsius increase in global warming. There is more extreme weather and diminishing Arctic sea ice among other changes. Limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius would require "rapid, far-reaching, and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society." Ninety-one authors and review editors from 40 countries prepared the report with more than 6,000 scientific references cited.

The good news is that some of the kinds of actions that we would need to take to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius are already underway around the world, but they need to accelerate. On May 24th, I urged the federal government to reject Cabinet's Climate Change Plan. This was based on the unrealistic 44 per cent greenhouse gas reductions from the expansion of Taltson Hydro, the back-end loading of emission reductions, misdirection of efforts on electricity production, rather than motivating large, industrial emitters, and a failure to address the leadership deficiencies noted in the Auditor General's report on NWT climate change.

The Cabinet response to the committee review of this audit tabled earlier this sitting fails again to adopt any changes in accountability or authority to ensure that there's adequate climate change leadership. Cabinet's approach on climate change falls far short of how we need to respond to the IPCC imperative of far-reaching and unprecedented changes.

The Minister of Finance finally announced Cabinet's approach to carbon pricing in July. While individuals and families will get some of the carbon tax back through the adjustments to the cost of living allowance and child benefit, industry, the largest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions, can actually get all of the carbon tax back that they pay. It will be individuals, families, and small businesses that will subsidize the GNWT initiatives under the energy strategy, not the largest emitters which include the diamond mines. This hardly seems fair or balanced.

The Minister of Finance has been silent on the issue of how the carbon tax will be managed and accounted for. It's not clear whether the reporting will try to link carbon tax funds collected with investments into renewables and any reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. A real carbon pricing system for the NWT can help us in fighting the climate change emergency that faces us.

We must pursue legislative and policy changes to ensure climate change leadership and an energy strategy built on renewables that doesn't masquerade as an infrastructure funding demand. As other regular Members have indicated, I cannot support Cabinet's Carbon Tax and Climate Change Plan. The federal government's back-stop approach on carbon pricing is starting to look a lot better. Masi, Mr. Speaker.