

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

### TALTSON PROJECT EXPANSION

February 8, 2019

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. On January 23, federal and territorial governments announced funding for the Taltson Hydro Expansion projects. There is \$480,000 from Canada to support feasibility and engineering work for the expansion and \$620,000 to support Indigenous engagement. Our government will have to come up with \$120,000 for the feasibility and engineering work. It's not clear who will actually receive the money, when, and whether this is old money or new.

Hydro-electricity is not necessarily green energy. There are impacts on water quality, aquatic life, release of greenhouse gases, mercury, and to people, as well. After 30 years of operation, there is still a public health advisory in place due to mercury contamination of lake trout in Nonacho Lake, the headwaters of the Taltson system. The honourable Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh has described the adverse impacts from the construction and operation of the Taltson system.

Cabinet's current plans for Taltson expansion will concentrate most of our energy efforts into one mega-project. This will take away money from small community energy projects where the cost of living is very high already. Getting those communities on renewables would reduce energy costs for everyone in the Northwest Territories. Large hydro projects have a very poor track record of delivering power on time and at predicted costs. Consider the current Commission of Inquiry respecting the Muskrat Falls Project and the huge cost overruns for Site C on the Peace River.

Why has there been no serious evaluation of other energy options outside the Taltson expansion? With no buyers, no funding, and no business plan, Taltson hydro is not the answer to our energy needs. Existing excess power at Taltson should be used to build the regional economy on the south side of the lake by powering electric vehicles and heating homes and businesses.

There are alternatives to Taltson. Building local and household energy self-sufficiency should be the direction we move in. Much better would be a comprehensive program for heating and transportation, as well as electricity production. Energy efficient retrofits and conversion of all homes and buildings to wood-pellet heating would cost less, reduce more greenhouse gas emissions, create more local employment, and actually reduce the cost of living and doing business and improving our housing situation. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.