

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

ARCTIC AND NORTHERN POLICY FRAMEWORK

March 6, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. On December 20, 2016, the Prime Minister announced that a new Arctic Policy Framework would be co-developed in collaboration with Indigenous, territorial, and provincial partners to replace the 2010 statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy. The framework is also to be informed by Mary Simon's report from the Shared Arctic Leadership Model Engagement. Our Premier sent out the latest draft of what is now known as the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework to selected stakeholders with a request for comments by February 28th. I commend the Premier for continuing to seek input in the development of this document, which will guide federal investment in the Canadian North for at least the next several years.

Last week MLAs received a submission by Alternatives North, and I will table that letter later today. Alternatives North noticed a significant difference between the introductory chapter and the NWT chapter in the document in terms of priorities. The introductory chapter starts with a focus on resilient and healthy people before moving on to issues related to infrastructure, economy, and environment. In contrast, the NWT chapters focused on large infrastructure projects and continued non-renewable resource development. The NWT chapter focuses on sustainable growth rather than sustainable development, and, Mr. Speaker, there is a big difference.

The NWT chapter is economically pessimistic rather than acknowledging that the diamond mines are coming to the end of their natural life and that we need to diversify our economy. The chapter correctly notes that nearly 50 percent of diamond mining jobs are filled by people from outside the Northwest Territories.

The GNWT has failed to find ways to fairly distribute mining benefits across the NWT and across generations. We have seen more than \$30 billion worth of diamonds produced and exported while our Heritage Fund is only about \$17 million. The NWT chapter fails to provide any alternatives and, in fact, suggests more of the same, with subsidies for further resource extraction and mega projects that will take money away from community development and diversification. Strategies to seize and develop available sustainable opportunities, especially in the knowledge economy, with the prospect of a polytechnic university for the Northwest Territories, and the conservation economy, with opportunities such as Thaidene Nene, have largely been ignored.