

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

PREMIERS' LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU REGARDING BILL C-68 AND BILL C-48

August 13, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. On June 10th, our Premier co-signed a letter, along with premiers of Ontario, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, to the Prime Minister of Canada. That letter warned that national unity would be threatened if the federal government did not accept numerous changes to federal Bills C-69 and C-48 as dictated by the oil and gas industry.

This action came as a total surprise to this MLA and many residents of the Northwest Territories. I will be the first to defend the Premier in expressing any personal views he may have on such matters, but he signed this letter as the duly elected head of this government, meaning he was speaking on behalf of this government. He was once again significantly breaching the guiding principles of consensus government as approved by himself as Premier and all MLAs in October 2016.

More specifically, these guiding principles state, "Except under extraordinary circumstances, Members of the Legislative Assembly should be made aware of and have opportunity to discuss significant announcements, changes, consultations, or initiatives before they are released to the public or introduced to the Legislative Assembly. Use of the element of surprise is inconsistent with consensus government."

Bill C-69 begins to rebuild federal environmental assessment to restore a modicum of public confidence and decision-making around areas of federal jurisdiction after the virtual destruction of these processes. It actually has very limited application in the Northwest Territories and comes into play only when there is a trans-boundary project or a development of national interest.

Bill C-48 deals with shipping off the west coast of Canada and has nothing to do with the Northwest Territories. It is not clear to me why the Premier felt it necessary to align this government with such a partisan effort, as represented by the letter that he signed.

Later today, I will ask the Premier whether he consulted or informed his Cabinet colleagues about this letter and why he continues to breach the guiding principles of consensus government. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.