

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

BATHURST CARIBOU CRISIS

August 19, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I have made many statements on the caribou crisis, in this House. During my time here, the Bathurst caribou herd has plummeted to about 8,000 animals, while our government has taken little action beyond continued restrictions on harvesting. Over the same time, the budget for Environment and Natural Resources has been slashed by 10 percent. Nothing has been done on our side of the border to temporarily or permanently protect habitat. The only new funding approved for the caribou crisis was for further study and a slight increase of the wolf bounty.

Our Minister of Infrastructure continues to announce more money for the Slave Geological Province road that will cut through the heart of the Bathurst caribou range. During the most recent announcement in the great hall last week of \$40 million, there was no mention of caribou. The ministry even boasted about this government's support of the Grays Bay road that would carve its way through what is left of the calving grounds of the Bathurst herd, this after our House passed a unanimous motion to oppose US development in the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd.

I and the remaining 8,000 Bathurst caribou are still waiting for a public announcement of Cabinet approval on the range plan. The plan provides some guidance moving forward, but it is rather meek on the issue of road planning and management. Having been weakened over time, there are few specific actions or costs identified, particularly around habitat protection. It's the only plan we now have to save the herd, and Cabinet continues to sit on it with no further funding. I truly hope that someone takes up this cause in the 19th Assembly when the supplementary appropriation comes forward for the Slave Geological Province road funding of \$10 million from this government and nothing appears for the Bathurst caribou herd range plan.

I will have questions for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources later today on what our government intends, when our government or whether our government intends to take any real action to save the Bathurst caribou herd. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.