

## STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

### CARBON TAX BILLS—3<sup>RD</sup> READING

August 20, 2019

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I know that it has been a long day, but I need to go on the record for my constituents so that they can see, in the future, what happened here tonight. I supported carbon tax as part of a comprehensive strategy for taking action on climate change. However, I don't support Cabinet's plan.

That plan is made up of three parts: the carbon tax bill that is before us this evening, Bill 42, which imposes, basically, a surcharge, a tax on some fuels. The other two parts of Cabinet's approach on this include the Energy Strategy, and I have spoken at length about the Energy Strategy. It's focused on Taltson rather than building real community and household energy self-sufficiency.

I have also talked about the Climate Change Strategic Framework that did not really address the failures identified by the Auditor General's Office in conducting a climate change audit of the Northwest Territories. The recommendation was that we develop real leadership, structure, organization, to allow for success. We had two strategies previously, they both failed, and I think that we are heading in the same direction. Of course, with the Climate Change Strategic Framework, 44 percent of the greenhouse gas reductions are supposed to come from Taltson expansion. I just can't see how it is going to be accomplished, Mr. Speaker.

The purpose of the carbon tax bill has always been pitched by this Cabinet, by this Minister, as the big, bad federal government coming in here and imposing another tax on Northerners. This could have been an opportunity for us to actually face the reality of the climate crisis that is before us and start to find ways to transition to a new economy that is free of fossil fuels and build energy self-sufficiency. That is the kind of transition and leadership that should have come from our Cabinet, but it didn't.

In terms of collaboration with the committee on the development of this plan, I am not a Member of the committee, but I got to sit in on a lot of the deliberations, and I can honestly say that, when the committee had requested options, scenarios, from the Minister, nothing came forward. That information was not provided to committee. You heard from my colleague in Yellowknife Centre about how some other jurisdictions have actually developed plans that I think are far superior to ours.

Committee was interested in taking the bill on the road, but the Minister continued to make changes to the large emitter provisions, and committee felt that there was no way that they could share that information with the public, so what is the point of taking something on the road when you can't share the latest possible information? There wasn't even a plain language summary of the bill and what it would do.

What we have ended up with, Mr. Speaker, is a bill that is a made-by-Cabinet approach where all of the rebates, all of the grants, all of that will be totally controlled by the Minister in the future. We have seen a transfer of the authority of this House to a Minister in a future government to set what that plan is going to look like. I just don't

think that this is good public policy.

Others have spoken about the lack of public reporting in the bill. There is no requirement for public reporting of the revenues in and the revenues out. There may not even be an opportunity for the public to comment on the draft regulations that set what the rebates and grants may be in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I tried to bring forward amendments to the bill to require some public reporting, require public input into the regulations. Unfortunately, they were ruled out of order because of the way that the bill had been crafted. I tried to make changes on the floor of the House and wasn't able to, because of the way that the bill was put together.

I am not going to go over the Yukon approach that my colleague from Yellowknife Centre spoke to very eloquently, but it does provide rebates to municipalities, First Nation governments. It does provide for revenue sharing and rebates with adjustments for those living in rural and remote communities. Mr. Speaker, we could and should have had that kind of plan here for our citizens. That's not what we got.

That might still be possible in the future, but not with this bill, not with the plan that Cabinet has developed. I cannot support Cabinet's plan. I believe it should be sent back for a more collaborative approach, for the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly to begin to take real action on climate change. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.