

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

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THAIDENE NENE**

**August 22, 2019**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Yesterday was a great day for the people of Lutselk'e, safeguarding our natural legacy for all NWT citizens, and development of the conservation economy. Leaders of the Governments of Canada, the Northwest Territories, and the Lutselk'e Dene First Nation officially signed the establishment agreements for the 26,000-square-kilometre protected area now formally known as Thaidene Nene. Mahsi cho for this important work.

This success came at the end of a long road that began in 1970, when land was set aside, and it was reignited in 2000, with the opening of negotiations towards the creation of a federal national park reserve. In 2004, the Lutselk'e Dene formally approved the boundary, vision, and name for Thaidene Nene, which means "Land of the Ancestors." Post-devolution, negotiations began to include the GNWT, leading to the agreements yesterday.

Continuing operation and management of Thaidene Nene will be through a consensus board shared by the Lutselk'e Dene and public government representatives. Industrial development is not permitted in the area. Infrastructure corridors may be allowed in the 9,000-square-kilometre territorial protected area, but they will require a rigorous process, including public comment and written reasons. A visitor, operations, and heritage centre will be built in Lutselk'e, creating initial direct employment estimated at 18 positions, including eight full-time jobs.

A regional management body including all Akaitcho communities, the Metis Nation, and federal and NWT governments must be set up, providing high-level collaboration on strategic and cooperative issues. In order to achieve the actual protection, the GNWT must now move swiftly to create the required regulations under the Protected Areas Act.

Then there is the money, Mr. Speaker. Canada will invest \$40 million towards infrastructure national park reserve operations in the first 12 years, and \$3.4 million annually for operations thereafter. Canada has even committed to invest \$7.9 million towards the establishment and operation of the GNWT portion of Thaidene Nene. I haven't seen any firm commitments on investment from our government, not even a news release or a Minister's statement announcing this major event.

It's not clear whether there is a territorial vision for protected areas and the conservation economy. Are protected areas going to be paper exercises, or is this government ready to embrace the opportunity to diversify our economy with commensurate investments? I'll have questions for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.