

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CLIMATE EMERGENCY

December 10th 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. On November 29, 2019, I attended the climate strike organized by Yellowknife's youth. This enthusiastic group has now organized three events in Yellowknife, and a similar group has organized strikes in Inuvik, too. What people young and old want is actual action on climate change, something this jurisdiction has generally failed to address.

Clearly, climate change is a real and urgent crisis, driven by human activity that impacts the environment, biodiversity, the economy, and human health. NWT residents are feeling the impacts of climate change today, from coastal erosion to wildfires, melting permafrost, heat waves, and other extreme weather events which are projected to intensify in the future. The impacts of climate change are being felt most profoundly in the polar regions of our planet.

The 19th Legislative Assembly has committed to strengthen this government's leadership and authority on climate change and to ensure climate change impacts are specifically considered when making government decisions. At least 473 Canadian jurisdictions, including national, provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous governments, have declared a climate emergency, and over 25 countries around the world have done the same.

It's time that our government declares a climate emergency in the NWT. We are obligated to meet international mission targets under the Paris Agreement, but we will need to make deeper reductions to hold global warming below 2 degrees Celsius, which would result in irreversible damage.

So what would a climate emergency declaration actually do? In many other jurisdictions, a response plan is being developed, just as any other emergency would require, accompanied by concrete actions and expenditure of funds. Later today I will table a draft motion that would result in the declaration of a climate emergency in the Northwest Territories with a requirement for the development of a response plan by January 1, 2021, to be tabled in this House. I welcome any feedback and input from the public and my colleagues on both sides of this House, as I intend to bring back the motion in our next session in 2020.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.