

MEMBER'S STATEMENT — KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE
CARIBOU EMERGENCY
FEBRUARY 5, 2020

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. In the last Assembly, I made over ten statements on the caribou crisis. It's now an emergency, and all our government has done is some planning, restrict harvest, fund some research and increase the wolf bounty.

On October 4, 2019, the Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board released its decisions on Tlicho Government and GNWT joint management proposal for the Bathurst caribou herd. Here are a couple of short quotes:

"The Board notes that there are no dates for implementation of Bathurst Caribou Range Plan Policies, nor is there any framework or timelines to judge how or when the plan is expected to contribute to Ekwo recovery."

"There should be an urgency to the implementation of the range plan as two of the five range assessment areas require enhanced management responses to address increased levels of disturbance."

The Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board also said: "The joint proposal indicates clearly to the WRRB that the need for habitat protection is now urgent. In addition, the abandoning of traditional calving grounds may be further evidence of the need for protection and limiting of disturbance."

There have been several traditional knowledge studies and other work that has identified key habitat for the Bathurst caribou herd, including their calving grounds. Key habitat lies on both sides of the NWT-Nunavut boundary. Progress on habitat protection has been glacial at best. The transboundary agreement with the Government of Nunavut has been discussed for years, with no end in sight. The latest joint management proposal for enhanced wolf removal, including aerial shooting, was submitted to the Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board on July 31, 2020, but still there's nothing on habitat protection.

I will have questions later today for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources about when this government is going to get serious about a comprehensive and balanced approach to the Bathurst caribou emergency and finally do something about habitat protection. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.