

MEMBER'S STATEMENT — KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE
GNWT-GOVERNMENT OF NUNAVUT BARREN-GROUND CARIBOU MEETING
February 25, 2020

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I would like to thank the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources for the invitation to the GNWT-Government of Nunavut research and management meeting on barren-ground caribou that was held this past Saturday. There were many Indigenous government leaders at the meeting, including the Tlicho chiefs, Lutselk'e Dene First Nation chief, Yellowknives Dene First Nation chiefs, North Slave Metis Alliance representatives, and also leaders from Nunavut, including Premier Joe Savikataaq, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated Vice President James Eatoolook, and others. There were many staff and researchers from these organizations as well. Forgive me if I have not recognized everyone.

There were a series of technical presentations on the status of several barren-ground caribou herds, including Bathurst and Bluenose East, management proposals and recommendations, and some discussion of other issues.

It would have been helpful to have heard a little more about what is happening in Nunavut, especially with regard to habitat protection. It was very good to hear that the Government of Nunavut has proposed a harvesting moratorium on the Bathurst caribou herd to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, as there continues to be up to 30 bulls taken each year on their side of the border.

General concerns were raised about communications and agreement to improve this within the Northwest Territories and across the border with Nunavut, too. A number of specific concerns were also raised. For example, it is not clear who and how decisions will be made around aerial shooting of wolves, should traditional harvesters not reach the desired targets. There was also frustration at the lack of progress on habitat protection and need for restrictions on industry, while harvesters have gone without caribou for more than five years.

I want to acknowledge that this was a useful continuation of the working relationships among Indigenous governments and public governments. There was also agreement to have further meetings with traditional harvesters and elders present, more information about the various plans and activities, and how they relate to each other. I hope I can be part of that process. I will have questions later today for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources on some of the issues that arose at the meeting. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.