

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

### CONTAMINATED SITES AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY

October 16, 2020

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. On April 17, 2020, the federal government announced \$1.72 billion in financial assistance for the remediation of orphan and inactive oil and gas wells in western Canada as part of Canada's Economic Response Plan for COVID-19. On May 28, I made a statement in this House about the potential for the NWT to access similar funding, working in partnership with Yukon and Nunavut. The Premier provided some assurances that "remediation from mine sites has always been a priority." The Premier also said that a joint letter was in preparation to federal Ministers from the three northern territories to advocate for such funding.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen that letter, and it is a request for support for the mining industry with mention of accelerated funding for northern contaminated sites buried on page 3. What I have learned since is that there does not appear to be a clear lead for our government on this file, no specific asks, and little coordination.

To repeat what I said in May, the Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory shows 1,647 sites in the NWT, with an estimated assessment of remediation cost at \$12.375 billion. The GNWT 2018-2019 public accounts show a total of 285 sites under our jurisdiction, with a cost of remediation estimated at \$70.6 million. Our Premier needs to make this work a priority as part of our efforts on economic recovery and part of the emerging remediation economy here in the Northwest Territories. There are obvious links to NWT Indigenous economic development, businesses, and the proposed polytechnic university. Billions of dollars will be spent on environmental remediation at Giant Mine, Norman Wells, and numerous other sites. In many ways, we are pioneering new technologies, approaches, and partnerships that should be the envy of the circumpolar world and form a central part of the polytechnic university. There will be jobs created in many of our smaller communities and regional centres.

Later today, I will have questions for the Premier on whether she will make it a priority to secure federal investment for accelerated remediation of contaminated sites as a part of our drive towards economic recovery and diversification. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.