

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

THAIDENE NENE AND PROTECTED AREAS

October 22, 2020

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I made a statement about Thaidene Nene in February, and I need to follow up as progress seems to have come to a halt. Thaidene Nene was formally established as a national park and protected area under GNWT legislation in August 2019. GNWT had to be dragged into the arrangement and resisted it at almost every step. Hopefully, this new Cabinet will take a much different approach to protected areas and the long-term sustainability they can bring, especially for smaller communities.

There is still no regulation to formalize the establishment for the GNWT portion under the *Protected Areas Act* and no regulation under the *Wildlife Act* that would establish the wildlife conversation area as part of this network. There are no management boards, no long-term funding, no management plans. These are not insignificant items, and there seems to have been little progress, though, since February and very little public communications.

The so-called public registry for the *Protected Areas Act* on the environment and natural resources web page does not meet the basic legal requirements of the legislation. I have no doubt that the great staff at ENR are busy with conservation planning, but there is little evidence of any progress on the public registry, such that it is. There is nothing in the public registry that indicates there have been any notices provided on the establishment of any protected areas, no notices to land use planning boards or renewable resources boards or anything on the recruitment of management board members. This public registry was meant to be a single-window access point for information, to ensure transparency and accountability around protected areas. A framework needs to be developed quickly, especially once management boards are established, as virtually all of their documentation is meant to be public.

There is nothing in the ENR budget I could see for 2020-2021 for the establishment of a real public registry, the type that was contemplated during the development of the legislation. Meanwhile, ITI has secured additional resources for a mineral administration and registry system. This government has devoted minimal resources to the management of protected areas, and there is a huge gap between public commitments and political will. We need a new approach, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions later today for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources about this government's commitments to building a conservation economy in fulfillment of its obligations with regard to Thaidene Nene and the *Protected Areas Act* as a whole. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.