

**MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY**

**February 9, 2021**

**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<sup>th</sup> and October 14<sup>th</sup>, I made statements in this House about the potential for the NWT to access similar funding, working in partnership with Yukon and Nunavut. As I understand it, the requests from our government keep getting pitched as support for the mining or petroleum sectors. Clearly, this approach is not working as no federal investment has materialized after eight months. Regular MLAs met recently with the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations, and there are no abandoned wells or infrastructure that does not have a clear owner that is still in business. The one exception may be the infamous Cameron Hills sour gas field that is hurtling towards us and should have been prevented. I will keep pushing our government to make the main focus message about an accelerated remediation program for northern contaminated sites not a bail-out for the resource sector.

To repeat what I said in May and October, the federal contaminated sites inventory shows 1,647 sites in the Northwest Territories, with an estimated assessment of remediation costs at \$12.375 billion, about six times our annual budget. The GNWT 2019-2020 public accounts show a total of 278 sites under our jurisdiction that may require remediation, with a cost of \$75 million. This work could be fast-tracked under a regional accelerated remediation program for the North, with the added benefits of environmental protection and capacity building for other work, like Norman Wells and the polytechnic university; in other words, building a remediation economy. Later today, I will have questions for the Premier on why there has been no visible progress on securing federal investment in an accelerated contaminated sites remediation program. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.