

**ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE**

**QUESTION 548-19(2): CLIMATE CHANGE REPORTING**

**February 11, 2021**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Good old paper. My questions are for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, who is the lead on climate change. Can the Minister explain how the Northwest Territories could possibly be on track for greenhouse gas reductions to meet our national and international obligations when reductions last year were less than 1 percent of baseline? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, ENR's the lead, but we have many departments working on this. Infrastructure is the one responsible for greenhouse gas. I do thank the Member for giving his questions up ahead of time so I am able to give this information here today instead of postponing it or telling you you'd have to ask another Minister.

In 2018, the Northwest Territories annual emissions were 1,230 kilotons, so we need to reduce our emissions by about 136 kilotons to meet our target by 2030. In 2019-2020, the first year of implementation of implementing the 2030 energy strategy, the Government of the Northwest Territories directly achieved approximately 6 kilotons of greenhouse gas emissions reduction. This represents a 4.4 percent reduction towards the GNWT target and have achieved mostly through energy efficiency and conservation investment. As our strategy continues to be implemented, larger and larger emission reductions will occur as large projects are funded and built which will more than likely bring online. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** That's great. That's more information than is contained in the actual report, but 4.4 percent in one year. We've got to reach the target in 2030. We're not going to make it, 2030. This government promised integrated reporting on climate change, but the first annual report failed to calculate how the carbon tax has impacted fuel consumption, greenhouse gas reductions, or even the effects on the cost of living. There are few links drawn between carbon tax and greenhouse gas emissions. Can the Minister describe how the climate change reporting actually integrates the carbon tax, the energy strategy, and the climate change strategic framework, and how he plans to include this information in future reports?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Our government released our energy and climate change strategy as we understood the need for them to work together to adapt to climate change and transition to a lower carbon economy. To this end, the climate change action plan annual report includes updates on relative activities from the energy strategy and the NWT carbon tax. Specifically, these updates can be found in the section on the goal number one, transition to a lower carbon economy. The GNWT has developed a

plain-language overview report to update the public on climate change action. This report includes information on implementation of a carbon tax energy strategy and climate change strategic framework. We will continue to deliver an integrated, whole of government approach to tackle the challenges of climate change and energy efficiency in our territories.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I fully recognize that COVID has obviously affected our ability as a government to address a number of important policy areas including climate change. The federal government and many others around the world are moving to a target of net zero by 2050. Can the Minister tell us when our government is going to review the less than ambitious pan-Canadian framework target and adopt net zero as part of our economic recovery approach and to deal with the climate emergency?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Again, this is information that I had to get from the Department of Infrastructure, and I thank the Minister and her staff for it. Under the 2030 energy strategy, GNWT committed to a full review after five years. The strategy was released in 2018, which means review will occur in 2023. This will provide enough time to properly re-evaluate the strategic objective to ensure that they represent what is achieved, given new technology and opportunity. These reviews will involve public and stakeholder's input. This input will both inform the future review of the energy strategy and future GNWT decisions on emission reductions.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. Clearly, we're not going to make the target. The Auditor General of Canada chronicled how our government's last two plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions were dismal failures, and the current one is certainly heading in that direction, too. The Auditor General said that a lack of leadership, policies, and legislation to give ENR the proper authority was largely at the root of the problem. What specific Cabinet decision-making tools or requirements have been changed to ensure government is taking climate change, the climate emergency seriously. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I believe the GNWT is fulfilling its mandate to show leadership on the climate change by being one of the first Canadian jurisdictions to take a consistent and systematic approach to ensuring meaningful consultation on climate change decisions in all departments. In December 2020, Cabinet and the Financial Management Board decision-making templates were revised to incorporate consideration of climate change mitigations and adaptation factors, including Executive Council decision papers, financial management submissions, joint Executive Council/Financial Management Board decision papers, and legislative proposals. Mr. Speaker, I can honestly tell you: during those conversations, we've heard the Member, we've heard the public, and we're trying to make sure the Executive and all departments make decisions based on climate change. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.