

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

PREVENTING LIABILITIES

March 2, 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. The first report of the court-appointed receiver for the NWT assets of Strategic Oil and Gas was released on November 9th. The available funds for the receiver to manage the site, keep it in environmental compliance, and to prepare regulatory submissions are dwindling quickly. There appears to be only about \$2.4 million remaining available for the site from the financial security held in the Northwest Territories. Clearly, the costs for remediation of this site will be in the tens of millions of dollars for taxpayers as it is inevitable GNWT will become the owner in 2021.

The Cameron Hills mess represents a total system failure to prevent this property from becoming a public liability. The last few stages have played out under our watch. We accepted this site under devolution, did not use any of our available tools to require full financial security or even a closure plan, and have not put in place any policies or legislative changes to prevent such a mess from happening again. We can't afford more public environmental liabilities. Our government has not done enough to demonstrate responsible resource development. The tens of millions of dollars that will need to be spent to properly remediate Cameron Hills should and could have been spent on housing, childcare, education, and other needs.

Preventing and better managing environmental liabilities was a priority of the last Assembly. We collectively failed and failed badly. Preventing environmental liabilities is not one of the priorities of this Assembly or in the mandate or even in the mandate letter of any Minister, as much as I tried and will continue to try to get our government finally moving on this issue. There's no roadmap, identification of gaps, or even a list of publicly available policies or legislative changes that are needed.

I've met with the Minister and his staff on this issue, and would dearly like to get something done during this Assembly. We need to do a number of things including: mandatory legislative requirements; foreclosure plans and full financial security consistent with the polluter pays principle; reasonable limits on the total discretion of Ministers on the form of financial security; better coordination of closure planning; and financial security across land, water, and resource specific legislation; and an early warning system that alerts political and senior managers when action is required. I will have questions later today for the Minister of Lands. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.