

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

EULOGY FOR DAVID SCHINDLER

March 10, 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. A good friend and advocate for the North and nature, David William Schindler, passed away last week at the age of 80. David grew up in Minnesota and studied engineering and then biology in the US before completing his doctorate at Oxford in 1966. Later that year, he moved to Canada to serve at Trent University before becoming the founding director of the Experimental Lakes Area project near Kenora, Ontario, in 1968. His 10 years there were filled with real-life experiments of adding different chemicals to small lakes to solve real-world problems, such as the dying Great Lakes and acid rain. This research was revolutionary in terms of our understanding of aquatic ecosystems.

In 1989, University of Alberta offered both David and his wife, Suzanne, positions, and he became the Killam Memorial Chair and Professor of Ecology. That same year, he was named to the Alberta Pacific Review Panel to study a proposed pulp mill on the Athabasca River. Cindy Kenny-Gilday sat on that panel for the Northwest Territories, and Jim Boucher, Chief of the Fort McKay First Nation, was also on the panel. They did their best to protect the North. Eventually, the mill went ahead but with new technology that was less harmful to the environment. At the University of Alberta, Schindler continued his water research. He warned about the environmental impact of how "the combination of climate warming, increases in human populations and industry, and historic drought is likely to cause an unprecedented water crisis" in the Prairie provinces.

In 1996, he appeared as an expert witness during the review of Canada's first diamond mine. He next turned his attention to the environmental impacts of the tar sands on the Athabasca River watershed. David was always watching out for us, what was upstream of the Northwest Territories. During his 50-plus-years, he was awarded most of the planet's top environmental science prizes and held 13 academic or honorary degrees from universities around the world. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2004.

One of his best quotes is as follows: "I am looking forward to some day seeing things done right so that I can relax and just do science. That's where the fun is. It isn't in hassling with politicians and that, which is to me rather like playing chess with a gorilla. The game is boring, and you know you are going to win, but you have got to be prepared to duck once in a while when they get angry and take a swing at you." Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.