

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

CARIBOU EMERGENCY

March 11, 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to say it's a pretty hard act to follow the last couple of statements there. In August 2019, Cabinet finally approved the long-awaited Bathurst Caribou Range Plan. That plan calls for a variety of actions, including a cumulative land disturbance framework, community guardianship, habitat conservation, mobile caribou conservation measures, road planning and management, offsetting compensatory mechanisms, wildfire and fuels management, and online map staking.

It appears much of GNWT's efforts at trying to assist with the recovery of the Bathurst caribou herd have been focused on harvest management and predator control. Harvest management has been in place for years. I want to acknowledge and appreciate the Minister's and Indigenous leaders' recent work on the illegal harvesting. I can't say much about wolf control as it is still before the Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board, but the ground and aerial shooting program did not yield the expected results. I continue to ask about our efforts at habitat protection and get vague answers on future actions. We should not plan or build roads into the range of the Bathurst caribou herd unless there are some clear signs of recovery and action on habitat protection.

The year 2020 was a wash for the Bathurst caribou herd as the calving ground surveys were not carried out, predator control appears to have failed, and very little seems to have been accomplished with regard to habitat protection. I'll have questions for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources about whether this government is serious about recovery of the Bathurst caribou herd. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.