

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

LAND USE PLANNING

May 31, 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I believe in land use planning. That's what I studied at university in the early 1980s and what brought me to the Northwest Territories in 1985. If you want to create sustainability and certainly over the future of land and water, meaningful and legally binding land use planning is required. While our Government agreed to legally binding land use planning in the Gwichin and Sahtu settlement areas as part of those land rights agreements, progress on other land use planning has been slow, if not glacial.

Deh Cho land use planning has been going on for many than 20 years, and from what I've heard, GNWT is now the obstacle to completion. Provisions are found in the Tlicho Agreement for land use planning, but progress there, too, has been slow without much public input.

As I understand it, GNWT has also spent our own funds to support land use planning in the Wek'eezhii management area without securing similar support from the Federal Government that is actually responsible for the costs of implementing the Tlicho Agreement.

I contrast this with the approach this Government has taken with the NWT Surface Rights Board. I tried to remove the funding for this board from this year's budget for a variety of reasons. Those reasons included the fact no disputes have ever been heard, that it is really unnecessary, and not a comanagement body by any stretch of the imagination.

This Government goes to extraordinary lengths to protect mining and mining rights but has little to show for protecting the land itself. Our Government is opposed to permanent protection of Edezhie and had to be dragged into Thaidene Nene.

I'll have questions later today for the Minister of Lands and why our Government has made so little progress on land use planning and continues to be an obstacle in protecting our lands and waters. Merci, Mr. Speaker.