

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE
COP 26 AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

November 22, 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Like many on this planet, I was very disappointed with the lack of concrete progress and agreement at the recent Conference of the Parties 26 or United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow. I was happy that the NWT had a delegation there.

What I've heard so far from our government is that we need federal assistance, more Indigenous representation in our delegation, and work with our circumpolar neighbours. Mr. Speaker, that's just not good enough or going to get us where we should and need to be. I'm going to make it easy for my Cabinet colleagues and lay out a path forward on the climate crisis.

One, we need a reorganization of this government to clearly set the climate crisis as a priority and to establish the authority to deal with it. There should be a new department of environment, natural resources and climate crisis. Take the energy projects and mandate out of infrastructure and even bring in the NWT Power Corporation, have one minister responsible for all of this. This would address the failures identified by the auditor general of Canada in her climate change audit.

Two, make a clear and unequivocal commitment to drop the climate change approach from the last Cabinet, ditch the 2030 energy strategy, the Climate Change Strategic Framework and elements of the carbon tax, develop a real and focused climate crisis response that includes adaptation and mitigation for the widely accepted carbon neutral target of net zero 2050 or even sooner, if you dare, and you should.

Three, face the crisis at the NWT Power Corporation and its entities head on. We have a crumbling set of antiquated assets and grids designed for an infinite planet and old technology. Develop a real and just transition plan that builds community and household energy self-reliance, not bigger grids and mega projects like the Taltson expansion.

Four, stop pretending big petroleum development is ever going to come back to the Northwest Territories; wind down the so called petroleum resources strategy, local transitional use of fossil fuels is okay, but plans for export are inconsistent with life on this planet as we know it.

There you have it, Mr. Speaker, the elements of a real plan to finally start realistically to recognize and address the climate crisis and establish necessary leadership that NWT residents deserve. I'll have questions for the Minister of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Crisis later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.