

I beg to differ with MLA Kevin O'Reilly

Editor's note: *The NWT & Nunavut Chamber of mines was the recent recipient of the NAPEG Professional Award of Merit in Geoscience, from the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists (NAPEG). NAPEG recognized the chamber for its, "dedication to, and support of, the North's mineral resources industry." This non-profit association is an advocate for responsible and sustainable mineral exploration and development for the North.*

In regard to Frame Lake MLA Kevin O'Reilly's attempted rebuke (Hansard, March 14) of Premier Bob McLeod's speech at the recent Arctic Oil and Gas Symposium in Calgary, let me provide a different perspective.

While it may sound strange that a minerals guy would attend, I also attended the conference. Organizers invited me to share experiences and successes in Northern mineral resource development, something oil and gas developers might find helpful.

I was able to share with attendees the good work that mining has done in the North. That over 80 years of mining – with new mines developed in every decade – is not boom and bust. How mining has contributed to our road, rail and hydropower infrastructure; to technical innovation with high efficiency diesel and wind power, ice highways and award-winning dike engineering. I shared how the NWT and Nunavut has for the first time in history passed \$3 billion in mineral production and how mining is creating the most significant Indigenous training, employment, business and royalty benefits in our history. I explained too, how Indigenous communities and governments now want to participate as owners in non-renewable resource development – not just mining but oil and gas as well.

Attending the conference allowed me to hear from several speakers on work they were doing in regard to oil and gas development. I learned that fossil fuels are not dead. For example, liquefied natural gas production

is growing, to help address climate change by offsetting the burning of coal.

Thus I was in the audience to hear McLeod speak. In my role working for another non-renewable resource industry – minerals – I'm very conscious of messages that might chase investors away. His message did not. In fact, I congratulated him on his strong and rousing message on behalf of Northerners for resource development in the NWT. I was also pleased to learn that the Premier's Red Alert helped bring Canada to the table to finally negotiate joint co-management and revenue sharing from offshore oil and gas resources in the Beaufort region. Kudos to McLeod for achieving what Newfoundland and Labrador laboured hard to get from Ottawa in the Atlantic Accord.

Contrary to O'Reilly, today we are most heavily dependent on government handouts, not non-renewable resources. Those hefty transfers and grants from Ottawa are a welfare cheque of sorts, something we get because we have insufficient economic development. However, over the past 20 years, diamond mining has helped move us closer to self-reliance. We need more of that and thankfully cabinet is not turning its back on mining. It's that same cabinet that MLA O'Reilly is rebuking that is also strengthening development of other resources, including fishing, tourism and agriculture. We need it all.

It's no surprise to hear O'Reilly say his patience is wearing thin with non-renewable resource development. He did this before and our chamber president took him to task (see *Yellowknife deserves more from MLA O'Reilly*, *Yellowknifer*, Nov. 16, 2018). He is not showing himself to be a development supporter.

There are many Northerners who make their living from mining and others who want to do the same from oil and gas development. Perhaps their patience is wearing thin with O'Reilly's position.

It's an election year. Remember to come out and vote.



GUEST Columnist

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