

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

ADDRESSING WORKPLACE BULLYING

February 24, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: It's Pink Shirt Day here and across Canada. Again this year, NWT MLAs and others are acknowledging the importance of this initiative to combat bullying. There was significant activity in the Great Hall today. Students from Yellowknife schools were here for an anti-bullying event sponsored by the Public Service Alliance of Canada North. Thank you to Jack Bourassa, Lorraine Hewlett, Steve Peterson, and other PSAC staff for once again organizing this event, and a huge thank you to the students and teachers for taking part in the event. I commend the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment for his interest in the event and for speaking to the students.

In the last few years, the anti-bullying campaign has gathered momentum across North America and across the Northwest Territories. NWT students, educators, and education authorities have developed and implemented strategies, awareness, and resources to deal with the issue of bullying in our schools. It has become a front-of-mind issue for both the students and educators. When we think of bullying, we must accept that bullying takes place in all kinds of environments and situations, not just schools. Bullying has to be considered in the larger context, the bigger picture. We cannot ignore the importance of addressing bullying in our society as a whole.

Four out of 10 employees are affected by workplace bullying. According to the Workplace Bullying Institute, "Many places of work, consciously or unconsciously, endorse, perhaps even encourage, bullying behaviour. And in fact, workplace bullies frequently get promoted or they are often not dealt with directly as the workplace culture does not know how to address such behaviour."

We've managed to bring bullying to the fore in the education system. We now have to do the same for the workplace and there are three key actions we can take: recognize bullying behaviour, speaking out at the time that any bullying takes place, and stand by those who are being bullied and support them. Our schools and students are laying bare the attitudes and wrongs of bullying, growing the next generation of students who won't stand for such abuse. In the workplace, the GNWT is taking a stand and promoting awareness among our workforce. I want to thank our Education, Culture and Employment minister, my fellow Members, students, and our workforce for working together today on the issue of bullying. Let's all move forward to a more tolerant and respectful space where there's no place for bullying in our schools, workplaces, and everywhere.