

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

**ADHERENCE TO THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

June 16, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. On May 10th, Canada finally removed its objector status to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and announced its unqualified support for the declaration. In ratifying its acceptance of the 46 Articles of the Declaration, Canada takes on responsibility to uphold and implement the wide variety of goals and actions itemized in the Declaration.

Canada's action follows more than eight years after GNWT unanimously endorsed the Declaration by resolution of this Assembly on February 19th, 2008. The federal announcement marks the beginning of a long process of harmonizing Canada's laws with the standards set in the Declaration, and improving the country's relationship with Indigenous peoples.

The federal government has announced its priority commitment to a renewed process of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. I'd like to draw Members' attention to one of the Declaration Articles in particular, Article 19, which says: "States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with Indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them."

A recent Dene Nation media release says, "the challenge is to find a mechanism to include Indigenous peoples in the Northwest Territories and their governments to work jointly with GNWT to determine priorities for spending." Very true.

Mr. Speaker, last week, our Premier co-chaired the inaugural Federal-Provincial Territorial Indigenous Forum in Ottawa and was Chair of its Aboriginal Affairs Working Group. Media reports indicate that the declaration was a major agenda item. I will have questions for the Premier on the substance and outcomes of those meetings. The declaration in its extraordinary new requirements for investigation and action creates obligations for our own government. GNWT was a leader in 2008 in embracing the Declaration. We have a leadership seat at the national forum dedicated to achieving the aspirations of the Declaration.

This government is also turning its attention to things such as new post-devolution legislation and regulation for managing our natural resources. In developing new resource management systems, it is not clear how we will meet our own obligations under the Declaration. I will have questions for the Premier later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.