

**MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE**

**ENROLMENT IN FRENCH FIRST LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**October 19, 2016**

**MR. O'REILLY:** [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On August 11, 2016, the Minister of Education published a new directive on education in French as a first language. The directive was as a result of what was supposed to have been a collaborative process. Unfortunately, the association in Yellowknife, which launched the lawsuit, and the Francophone School Board of the Northwest Territories were not directly consulted regarding the directive and they do not support the changes.

Almost at the same moment the Yukon was able to manage legal undertakings, which were quite similar, regarding education and French as a first language but with very different results. The Government of the Yukon adopted an approach to those based on consultation and negotiations regarding admission to the francophone school system. All the parties agreed on the result and nobody had any unpleasant surprises. This is not the case where we were concerned.

The Government of the Yukon used a regulation pursuant to its Education Act, followed by written delegation of authority. That policy direction has formally delegated the authority over francophone school admissions to the board there with oversight through annual reporting. In the Northwest Territories the Minister is still responsible for admission and there is no delegation of authority. Of the 28 Francophone school boards outside of Quebec ours is the only one to not enjoy such a delegation. Why?

We should note, the Yukon limited to 5 per cent the number of admissions of non-rights holder Anglophones who are immigrants who do not speak French nor English. There's no limit for any other category of non-rights holders. In the Northwest Territories a limit has been imposed on all non-rights holders when the admissions reach 85 per cent of the school capacity. So the attendance at both francophone schools is approaching that threshold, especially with the addition of pre-kindergarten in 2017. A directive will have an effect to limit seriously and artificially the growth. This is going to lead to more lawsuits.

In my opinion, if we had adopted a more cooperative approach we could have had the same satisfactory conclusion for everybody. I will have questions to ask the Minister of Education later today.