

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

**EMPOWERING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

**November 2, 2016**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. I served on Yellowknife City Council for nine years and understand the importance of that order of government to our communities and the need for them to have broad powers to manager their own affairs. As in other parts of this country, our local governments are creatures of GNWT, established under territorial laws. We have a duty to ensure local governments have the authority to meet the needs of their citizens.

Usually, this works pretty well, so long as the government responsible for the enabling laws meets its responsibility to keep the substance and detail of the law up to date, to meet the challenges of changing times. Unfortunately, the GNWT has been failing in that responsibility and the City of Yellowknife is suffering as a result. Changes are needed to territorial statutes including the *Cities, Towns and Villages Act*, the *Property Assessment and Taxation Act* and the *Summary Convictions Procedures Act*. These changes would give the city authority to do good things. They could loan homeowners money to do energy retrofits that allow citizens to save money and reduce their carbon footprint. Changes would allow the city to introduce a hotel tax to invest in tourism development, to phase-in municipal tax increases, to make it easier for the city to collect back taxes and to allow the city to serve parking ticket notices through the mail, rather than serving summons in person.

For up to a decade now, the city has been politely calling for changes. Some of these changes have been discussed since 2007 when I was still on city council. Resolutions of the NWT Association of Communities have been proposed and adopted. The city has requested these changes in countless meetings with territorial officials, MLAs and Ministers. Losing patience, the city has passed a motion calling for action on the changes and written the MACA Minister to strongly request action. The response seems to be that the *Cities, Towns and Villages Act* will not be opened for amendment until the next Assembly, and the city must continue to wait. That's not good enough and it fails to meet a number of commitments in our mandate.

I will have questions for the Premier on how this government intends to respond to this clear request from the City of Yellowknife and meet our mandate commitments to enable community governments to meet the needs of their citizens. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.