

## ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

### QUESTION 438-18(2): EMPOWERING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

November 2, 2016

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. My questions are for the Premier in relation to our mandate commitments to empower local governments. Earlier today I raised the City of Yellowknife letter that requested a number of territorial government acts be changed. The city has been after our government here for almost a decade to make changes to these pieces of legislation. How will our government respond to the city's request for changes to territorial legislation on making what amounts to housekeeping changes that the city urgently requires to better meet the needs of its citizens? Masi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Honourable Premier.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We received the letter yesterday from the mayor of the City of Yellowknife, and also the Member has been a city councillor for nine years, so he doesn't seem to appreciate the good working relationship that this government and the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has with the NWT Association of Communities. However, having said that, we will take the letter; we will break it out into different pieces; even though we are working on many, many legislative priorities, we will work with the city to make sure that these proposals are dealt with in a timely fashion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I'm disappointed that the Premier is going to talk about my track record here in working as a city councillor. I know that when I was on the city council, we always worked well with the Yellowknife MLAs, so I'll try to keep this as a fair set of questions here. But why I raise these questions to the Premier is he is responsible for intergovernmental relations. He's also responsible for mandate commitments, and so I'm just going to ask the Premier for firm commitments when it comes to changing the *Cities, Towns and Villages Act* to allow for local improvement charges in relation to energy retrofits and the visitor levy. Is that something that we're prepared to do in the lifetime of this Assembly?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** We have been doing some research on a number of these initiatives. I was around when the hotel tax was proposed and was introduced, and so we have the research completed on the hotel levy. We are very close to finalizing research on energy retrofits, and we will be moving forward with consultations with other communities. As a matter of fact, MACA officials met with the city on September 29<sup>th</sup> and they agreed on a work plan. We expect that, in early 2017, we will be able to move forward. We also need to work with other departments, Ministers, MACA, Justice and Finance, because some of the proposals, we've heard for the first time.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I'd like to reassure the Premier, though, that this is not the first time these changes have been requested. Some of them date back to when I was on city council in 2007. So I'm pleased to hear that we're going to have some more research done; research is great, but I'm looking for action. Changes have been requested to the *Property Assessment and Taxation Act*. Is that something that's going to happen within the lifetime of this Assembly?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** I believe I mentioned that we are looking to be able to move forward early 2017 with some parts of the requests in the letter.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the response and thank the Premier for that. But I'm still a little bit concerned here, more than a little bit concerned, that we're not going to make progress on these legislative changes within the lifetime of the Assembly. So is the Premier prepared to work with Regular MLAs who might bring forward a private Member's Bill to make these legislative changes, which are essentially housekeeping matters, if the other side can't do it in a reasonable period of time? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are always open to any methods that will move legislation faster. If the Member has some ideas, we would certainly be prepared to entertain them. We would also like to work with all of the Members to help us identify what should be the priorities. Some of the legislative priorities we're working on, the Department of MACA is working on, is to update the civil emergency procedures, the territorial emergency procedures, the fire prevention and community fire prevention plans, the Western Canada Lotteries legislation, legislation for 911, access to information for communities, energy efficiency. So we have all of these other priorities, and I'd be very pleased to work with the Members on the other side to help tell us which ones should be advanced the fastest.