

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

18TH ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

January 31, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, monsieur le President. We are now about a third of the way through our term. On December 15, when he became the Premier, he said "This will be an Assembly of change and better government." This Member and the public are still waiting for the promised changes. To date, there have been a total of 14 bills, eight of which were appropriations. Yes, Mr. Speaker, this Cabinet has introduced an amazing total of six bills in one third of our term.

We may go down in history as the most legislatively lethargic Assembly in history. Those six bills, outside of appropriations, dealt with pithy matters including:

- A freeze on our salaries in the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act;
- Changes to the Vital Statistics Act to allow birth certificates in Indigenous languages, a good thing;
- Probably my favourite, the Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act;
- Adding a Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund to the Revolving Funds Act;
- Changes to the Children's Law Act to improve parental support, another good thing;
- Updating the Marriage Act to bring us into the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, this ambitious legislative agenda has not put our committees to work or delivered on the promises of devolution. In the 17th Assembly, 26 mirror bills were passed to implement the devolution agreement. Most of those bills had no public discussion or debate. The Premier of the day promised we would "evolve" and design "made-in-the-North" solutions. Guess how many of those devolution bills have been changed in almost three years? If you guessed zero, you are right.

Mr. Speaker, what is going on with Cabinet? Why are there no bills coming forward? I believe it is because all of our capacity for change has been directed to the cost reduction exercise to meet Cabinet's fiscal strategy of reducing programs and services to the residents of the NWT. Potential departmental amalgamations, six departments into three, which is also primarily driven by cuts, is also eating up inordinate amounts of time and energy.

Mr. Speaker, this has to stop so we can actually get on with the business of government -- making legislative changes to improve the lives of NWT residents, now and for future generations, so we can better manage our resources, reduce the cost of living, and invest in our Mandate now. I will have questions for the Premier on Cabinet's legislative inertia and lethargy later today.