

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

PROPOSED UNIVERSITY FOR THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

February 7, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, monsieur le President. I want to talk about how we can develop a real post-secondary education system leading to transformative change in the Northwest Territories. I'm talking about beginning the work of building a university of the Northwest Territories.

Canada is the only circumpolar nation without a university in its arctic or sub-arctic region. In 2015, I had the opportunity to visit the second largest city in Iceland, called Akureyri. It's a thriving place with about 19,000 people and a university established in 1987. There are now about 1,900 students and 180 faculty and staff. Many of the students are from the circumpolar world including Canada. Undergraduate and graduate degrees are offered in:

- business administration;
- education sciences;
- educational studies;
- health sciences;
- natural resources sciences; and
- polar law.

There are seven research institutes on campus. All of this activity generates business, innovation, and many international partnerships. There is no reason why we can't do the same here in the Northwest Territories if our leaders have the vision and political will.

In the Northwest Territories we have developed world-leading practices in the documentation and application of traditional knowledge and its use in environmental management. Our integrated resource management system established through Indigenous land rights agreements is the envy of many around the world, and there is a lot of interest and study of what we are doing up here. We are continually developing new approaches to the architectural and engineering challenges of cold climate design, construction, and operations. I have raised the issue of environmental legacies that have been left behind by past industrial operations, but the flipside is that they have developed a lot of experience with site closure and remediation that can be shared around the world.

Putting these concepts together with our existing institutions of College nordique, Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, and Aurora College, we can build a strong post-secondary education network and university of the Northwest Territories. This is the kind of transformative change that the federal government is looking for and many Northwest Territories' residents, too, as we look beyond mining. I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.