

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

### ORAL QUESTION 557-18(2): LEGISLATION TO ENABLE CREMATION IN THE NWT

February 9, 2017

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. The department has said that it has a heavy legislative workload. Can the Minister explain what legislation her department expects to bring forward during the life of this Assembly? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs actually has quite a bit of legislation that we are working on. Some of it is from our mandate. Some of the them are from the Auditor General's Report, et cetera, so the things that we are working on currently are the Civil Emergency Measures Act that needs to be amended. We are working on the 911 legislation and regulations. We are working on the Fire Prevention Act. We are working on the Western Canada Lottery Act and regulations. At a request by the City of Yellowknife, we are also doing some research on the Cities, Towns and Villages Act in regards to the hotel levy and the emergency retrofits. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you to the Minister for that list of legislation. We've got the list now. How does the regulation of cremation fit into the legislative agenda for the department? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** The topic of cremation actually was not in our mandate. However, it has been brought forward to us as a department. We are actually engaging with stakeholders in the spring, coming up here. We have added, actually, the cremation issue to our list of topics that we'll be working with stakeholders to define what the priorities should be and what order of legislation we should be working on so that we are not only meeting the needs of the Government of the Northwest Territories, we are actually meeting the needs of the consumers, the stakeholders, that will be impacted by these decisions.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the answer from the Minister. It is good to know that there are going to be some consultations around this issue, but I have raised the issue of capacity of Cabinet and their departments to bring forward legislation before. What would it take to move forward with legislation to regulate cremation and to allow a local business to grow and provide our residents with better services at lower costs?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would really like to say that putting forward the issue, the legislation, around cremation, would be easy. However, in all honesty, I don't see it as easy. When I give more thought to it, there are a number of steps. Again, we would be looking at prioritizing what we need to do to make sure that we take care of the public safety of community members -- that would be my priority number one -- making sure that the stakeholders that are impacted by all the legislation have a say in what they say are their priorities.

Cremation, at first, I thought would be an easy amendment or it would have to be an act that we would have to do in MACA; it would take some regulation changes from Health and Social Services and their Public Health Act. The bigger thing that I worry about is stakeholder engagement. The cremation might impact some of these businesses. It may impact some of the residents. It may impact seniors. We would have to consult with them. In all honesty, I do fear a little bit of what is called NIMBY, which is "not in my back yard." Knowing the position, we would have to consult with residents to make sure that they would be accepting of the act.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the response from the Minister. It sounds like she has started to do some homework around this. That is a good thing, but there is model legislation out there already. I am happy to share it with the Minister to try to move this along. I know that the operator who has brought this to my attention is looking at a chemical process, so emissions are really kept to a minimum.

I guess what I am looking for now from the Minister, though, is: can she commit to taking the lead on this issue with her Cabinet colleagues to ensure that there is a timely resolution, within our term, to allow this local business to grow and provide our residents with better services at a lower cost? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I put my hand up and said that I wanted to be a Minister, the biggest thing I talked about was being accountable, being transparent, and talking to people, asking stakeholders what was important before I made major decisions. I have followed that promise within my housing portfolio. I am following it within MACA. In order to keep my promise, I would have to bring that issue to the stakeholders and have them define what the priorities should be for us to move forward in this.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.