

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

### LOCAL IMPROVEMENT CHARGES FOR HOUSING ENERGY RETROFITS

February 22, 2017

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. The City of Yellowknife has explored innovative ways to improve energy efficiency of our housing, reduce the cost of living, create local employment, and help fight climate change. Their focus is on reducing use of space heating energy, and the proposal is expertly researched in the excellent Pembina Institute Report, "Loans for Heat: Towards a Yellowknife Energy Savings Program." I will be tabling that document later today.

Energy retrofits could include installing wood or pellet stoves, improving insulation and air sealing, and switching to more efficient furnaces and boilers.

Many people lack savings or credit to apply for energy retrofits upfront; that's where local improvements charges, or LICs, come in and why they're being used across Canada. Under an LIC program, the municipality enables homeowners to get low-interest loans for energy retrofits, then pay back the loans on their property tax bills and enjoy lower energy costs for home heating. The loan is tied to their property rather than to the property owner, so if an owner sells the house, the debt passes to the new owner. Because LIC enable people with limited savings and poor access to credit to go ahead with retrofits, LICs can bring lower energy bills to low-income families who need the savings the most.

Our *Cities, Towns and Villages Act* already allows municipalities to use LICs to help cover the cost of infrastructure investments such as sewers and sidewalks. LICs are not being used for improvements to individual properties, because the wording of the *Act* is poorly suited for an effective energy efficiency financing program.

For some years, the City has been asking this government to amend the *Cities, Towns and Villages Act* to allow for LICs. A 2013 resolution of the NWT Association of Communities urges this action. The GNWT's 2013 Energy Action Plan commits to doing this, as well. I was very pleased last week to hear the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs say this legislative amendment has moved onto the department's list of legislated priorities for this Assembly. With a very simple legislative amendment, our government can enable our cities, towns, and villages to more effectively join the fight on climate change, reduce our cost of living, create local jobs, and improve our housing stock. Let us make this happen, Mr. Speaker.

I will have questions later today for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.