

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

MANDATE COMMITMENTS TO INCREASE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

March 8, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Today, March 8, is International Women's Day. It's the day we celebrate the contribution of women to our society and commit ourselves to action to improve the equality and participation of women.

Looking around this house, we can see there's a lot of work to do to boost equality of representation and participation.

Members know that our mandate for the 18th Assembly called for actions to increase the number of women running for elected office. One commitment is to support the delivery of workshops aimed at increasing the number of female candidates in elections. My colleague from Yellowknife Centre and our Minister Responsible for the Status of Women are doing that through the Daughters of the Vote project and candidates' schools for women. I congratulate them on that work.

Another measure in our mandate aims to increase gender equity through appointments to boards and agencies. New statistics from the Department of the Executive show that half of the people sitting on boards are now women. In the past year, the government has appointed 107 people, 56 per cent of whom are women. That's up from last year, when only 46 per cent of board members were women. Three of the four Supreme Court judges and half our Territorial Court judges are women, although only a third of our departmental deputy ministers are women. I commend the Minister of the Executive for the transparent reporting and tracking of our board appointments. This is an important part of making our government more open and accountable. Perhaps the next step would be to consider the establishment of an NWT Public Service Commission to handle such appointments.

Appointments to boards are not the same as elections, but they are a very important first step in gaining experience and confidence. Participation on boards and governing bodies teaches invaluable skills in rules of order, accountability, and in pursuing priorities through cooperation. They are the incubator for tomorrow's elected leaders, and I encourage the government to continue our efforts here.

A third action under the mandate is the mounting of a communications plan to increase female participation in politics. The mandate progress report tabled in the House this week is silent on that matter. There has been some reporting and action from Elections NWT on this matter. I think we need a cooperative effort with that organization that ramps up soon, with the next territorial election only two years away. I'll look forward to details on that in the coming year. Happy International Women's Day. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.