

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

**QUESTION 744-18(2): NORTHERN FRONTIER VISITORS CENTRE**

**May 25, 2017**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur President. My statement earlier today focused on the need to begin planning and budgeting for a new permanent home for the new Northern Frontier Visitor Centre. Does the Minister of Tourism agree that it is inequitable and obviously unsustainable to expect the Northern Frontier Visitors Association to foot the cost of a Yellowknife Visitor Centre when centres in Inuvik, Dawson, and at the border are fully funded by GNWT? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would disagree with the Member that it is inequitable. We fund these different tourist information centres across the Northwest Territories based on different needs. Some are run by societies, some are run by local governments, some are run by contractors and such, and we base our funding based on needs as such across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I am disappointed to hear the response from the Minister. He has provided the Numbers, and I think they show otherwise, but the situation that we find ourselves in today with no visitor services in Yellowknife is unacceptable. Dedicated full-time staff have been laid off, artisans have lost an important retail outlet, and summer tourists will have reduced access to services. I just do not understand why we are in the situation that we are and that is has taken this much to get the government to finally act.

Can the Minister explain what he and his staff are doing to find a permanent location for the Yellowknife Visitor Centre, and will this include GNWT finally picking up the cost of its operation?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** As we dealt right now, we dealt with the short-term situation that has come upon the Northern Frontier Visitor Information Centre. They will be moving into the museum just down the road here in a short time, and we have assisted them with that along with the City of Yellowknife which has topped up some of their funding. In the long-term need, we have to sit down with City of Yellowknife and the Northern Frontier Information Centre and find out what are going to be the best practises going forward and the needs of the this tourist information centre to serve the residents of Yellowknife.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the response from the Minister, and am happy to help in any way I can, but we have got to move this forward very quickly so we have a permanent location in time for the aurora season. In the last sitting, my colleague from Hay River mentioned poor highway signage for the new hospital in Hay River, and the Minister had signs up the next day. What a great response, but there are virtually no signage on the highways into Yellowknife to help tourists find a visitor centre. Can the Minister of Tourism talk to the Minister of Infrastructure and commit to putting up signs

here in Yellowknife so that tourists can actually find even a temporary location for the visitor centre?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** I will look into the matter. We will have to consult with the City of Yellowknife as well because, depending on where the signage is going, some of it will be within the municipality. Anything along the highway system, we can certainly have a look at it and we will have that discussion and I will let the Member know.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and I do appreciate the response from the Minister, and I will be watching the highway very closely to look for those signs.

Over a week ago, the City of Yellowknife committed to an additional \$17,000 in funding to support the transition of the visitor centre to a temporary location. In a news release dated yesterday, the Minister committed to "cover costs associated with the Association's move to the new location and the interim storage of its assets." That is great; I appreciate that. Can the Minister confirm that these costs will indeed be covered from funding supplemental to the existing Contribution Agreement to the Northern Frontier Visitors Association, and how will this work? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Yes, the Member is correct. We are going to do the supplemental funding above and beyond what we already allocate to the Frontier Visitors' Centre, and we have already allocated quarterly the money that they need to operate for the first part of this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.