

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

**QUESTION 861-18(2): VISITOR SERVICES IN YELLOWKNIFE**

**September 22, 2017**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Since the middle of June the Northern Frontier Visitors' Centre has been closed. The numbers tell the client service story: 725 visitors served in July of this year versus 3,018 the previous year. The City of Yellowknife is stepping in on a temporary basis until March 2018, but what's the plan for a vigorous interim arrangement that will carry us through until a new permanent visitors' centre can be opened? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is correct; the City of Yellowknife has stepped up and is going to have a look at doing this until the end of the aurora season this year. We are in discussions with them on moving this plan forward. Talks are going well. We want to be able to develop something and establish an appropriate model that's sustainable for the long-term delivery of visitor services in Yellowknife, and we will continue to do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** It's great to hear that, but I'm actually learning more about what's going on through the newspaper than the regular updates from the Minister. Can he explain what support, if any, is being given to the city to temporarily deliver visitor services to March 2018 and how that compares to support that was provided to the Northern Frontier Visitors' Association?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** I can tell the Member that we are continuing with the support that we gave the Northern Frontier Visitors' Centre. The same allocation is going to the City of Yellowknife in the interim moving forward, so whatever funding was not used up by the Northern Frontier Visitors' Centre in this fiscal year, the remaining amount will be going to the City of Yellowknife.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks to the Minister for that. No increase, but I guess status quo in terms of supporting this booming industry here in Yellowknife.

We've known for at least six months that the visitors' centre was likely going to close; the museum desk was a stopgap measure, but what is the long-term solution here? I would like to hear from the Minister on what that long-term solution to support tourism in Yellowknife is from his perspective.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Like I said, we're working with the City of Yellowknife and their officials to have an appropriate sustainable model for the long-term tourism delivery services in the City of Yellowknife. These discussions will be ongoing, and we will continue to review this process going forward, as well as the fiscal capacity that we have. We have spent millions of dollars on tourism in the Northwest Territories, and we will continue to do so right across the territory.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister for the commitment of millions of dollars across the Northwest Territories. I pointed out that there are three visitors' centres elsewhere that were created with our funds, GNWT funds, including work like leasehold improvements in Dawson City, \$1.8 million in construction costs, but what's being done here in Yellowknife? Doesn't Yellowknife deserve at least equal treatment for a year-round operation? Will the Minister begin work now to commit a proportionally equivalent amount of money to the construction of a permanent visitors' information centre here in Yellowknife? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** This isn't about just cutting up the pie to make it equal for everybody in the Northwest Territories. Tourism is a growing market in the Northwest Territories; we're using it as one of the main factors of diversifying our economy.

We have spent money all over the place trying to support the industry, not just in Yellowknife, which gets a significant amount of visitors. We are trying to spread it out across the territory to make our great land more accessible and more enjoyable for all tourism participants who come to the NWT.

We have community tourism coordinators, Aboriginal tourism, a championship program, community tourism infrastructure contribution programs, and we have the tourism diversification and marketing program. This money is spent right across the territory.

In conjunction, we work very closely with NWT Tourism on how to support this industry across the NWT. We will continue to work with the City of Yellowknife on this approach that will make it the best possible approach at the City of Yellowknife as they try to develop their tourism and develop their marketing program moving forward, and we will work closely with them and we will continue to inform the house on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.