

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

UNIVERSAL AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE

September 27, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. The creation of a universal system of affordable childcare is one of the biggest promises of this Assembly, something we all agreed to work on at the beginning of our term. Collectively, we agreed to "develop an action plan for universal daycare within the next two years, including a timeline for implementation." This does not mean we have to implement universal childcare by 2019, but to at least develop an action plan to do so within an appropriate timeline.

Universal childcare is no pie-in-the-sky hallucination. It is a matter of priorities and making choices. The fact that affordable pan-territorial child care could be achieved was documented during the last Assembly by the *Feasibility Study of Universal Affordable Daycare in the Northwest Territories* commissioned by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment in response to a motion of this Assembly on October 31st, 2013. That analysis provided in the study proved that child care could be offered to all NWT children up to four years old for about \$20 million per year delivered on the same model as Quebec. It predicted a resulting increase in GDP of \$16 million or more, an increase in labour income in excess of \$15 million, creation of about 200 new jobs, increased female participation in the workforce, increased tax revenue, and decreased social assistance. Anyone who wanted it, would have had access to daycare for their kids with all the early childhood benefits that it would provide.

The revised mandate tabled in this House on September 21st abandons universal child care for the NWT, and will represent a broken promise if it is approved. A firm priority is replaced by a weak statement about "making child care available and affordable" with no timeline, no action plan, and no measurable commitments. Gone is the promise in the mandate of an action plan. Gone is the timeline for implementation. A broken promise, Mr. Speaker.

What happened with the commitment to put together an action plan on universal child care within two years in the current version of the mandate? I will have questions for the Minister on what work has been undertaken on the mandate commitment to develop an action plan for universal child care for the NWT. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.