

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

ARTS FUNDING

February 9, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. A Legislative Assembly e-petition has been started asking that some of the funds raised through the Western Canada Lottery program, which now go entirely to Sports and Recreation, be used to fund arts activities. This issue was also raised during the recent public hearing on Bill 1, the *Western Canada Lottery Act*. At that hearing, the MACA Minister left open the door a crack to develop a definition for recreation, but only in consultation with the sports and recreation groups. So how can we go about improving our government's investment in the arts?

Later today I will table recent correspondence from members of the arts community and the ECE and ITI Ministers. ECE says it is responsible for skills development, arts creation, and presentation, and ITI looks after business support to the arts, including marketing and promotion. ECE reports it provides about \$2,000,000 annually to support arts and heritage organizations and individuals. The funding is split with five grants and funding programs and \$600,000 in project grants being supplied through the NWT Arts Council. ITI states it supports arts initiatives to the tune of \$1.6 million in 2016-2017 through a number of programs.

The NWT Arts Council was completely underfunded to meet the administrative load of its oversubscribed programs, and has not had an increase in its GNWT contribution in 10 years. Other arts programs are still being administered separately.

I recommend that the Ministers of ECE and ITI examine structural changes to merge all film, craft, and arts programs under the NWT Arts Council so there is a one-stop-shop approach that also has adequate capacity. This shop, or this office, would manage both the operating and granting budgets, and bring a coordinated, mutually supporting focus to bear on activities from across artistic sectors. It should be the vantage point for accessing other funds, including those from foundations, but most importantly the many and generous federal funding programs that are out there.

I will have questions for the Minister of ECE about how we can bring the greatest efficiencies and focus to bear on using and leveraging the funds we have in increasing our investment in this growth sector of our economy that also creates significant well-being and preserves culture. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.