

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

AMENDMENTS TO THE CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES ACT FOR A HOTEL TAX LEVY

February 20, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Last weekend the NWT Association of Communities met in Hay River for its annual general meeting. A resolution calling on the territorial government to pass amendments to the Cities, Towns and Villages Act that would empower tax-based communities to collect a levy was passed in 2010. That is eight years, or two Legislative Assemblies, ago.

The City of Yellowknife has requested this change countless times. In October 2016 council passed a motion calling for the change and wrote the MACA Minister to strongly request action. What we are really talking about here, Mr. Speaker, is a small addition to the list of legislative powers found in section 70(1) of the act, to give the tax-based communities the ability to bring in a hotel levy and to administer the funding.

The MACA Minister said in this House that a bill to amend the CTV Act is expected in the May-June session. That would put passage of a law down to October at the earliest. The Minister has said that the delay is needed to consult with stakeholders, including the hotel sector. Consultations with the hotel industry have been going on since at least 2010.

With the closure of the Northern Frontier Visitors' Centre last fall, the city stepped up to open a tourism information centre. The city runs this with \$161,000 in territorial funding, and they top it up themselves, as well.

That is nowhere near enough to meet the expense of a visitors' centre here in Yellowknife. ITI spends \$227,000 a year for three seasonal staff plus operating expenses in Dawson City, Yukon, but the NWT community with the most tourism has to top up revenues itself and would like to top them up even further with a hotel levy, with CTV Act amendments, if that happens soon enough.

We have given authority to our local governments. When they need this authority improved or amended, it is our responsibility to act, and promptly. This responsibility has been made even more acute by our government's withdrawal from tourism visitors' services, downloading the financial burden on the city.

October is too long to wait to create the ability to raise needed funds to respond and promote tourism. We need a bill soon, and hopefully before the end of this sitting, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs later today.