

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

CANNABIS LEGALIZATION PREPAREDNESS

October 17, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to provide a quick report on Cabinet's cannabis legalization preparedness. First of all, the sales site of the new NWT Liquor and Cannabis Commission popped up today to sell cannabis online, although it's extremely hard to find and there are no links from GNWT sites. On the information side, a number of departmental websites deal with cannabis. If one department could win a prize on this, it would be Health and Social Services. It has a good assortment of information, documents, and links on health effects of cannabis. The department sponsored an online talk by a health expert and sent out a mailer, as the Minister mentioned earlier today.

The Department of Justice website has some information for tenants and landlords on cannabis use and plants, but nothing on policing or penalties for cannabis law violations. The Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs has some general information about topics including possession restrictions, growing cannabis, buying it, and impaired driving. Infrastructure has a bid on impaired driving. The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission has a general information sheet that deals with cannabis as a fitness to work and impairment matter. There is nothing on the Department of Finance, other than a link to the Executive web page. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment and MACA websites have nothing. There is nothing yet in place for private cannabis retail to fulfil Cabinet's commitment to allow private retail within six months after passage of the bill.

I'm not aware of any government-wide communications, plans, or efforts, and given the uneven coverage of cannabis on departmental web pages, some improvements are clearly in order. There are also issues about the transparency and accountability for the revenues.

Our government will receive revenues and spend funds on implementation activities. Revenues will show up in the Liquor Revolving Fund, and there will be separate reporting on cannabis versus liquor. It is not clear what Cabinet intends to spend in terms of implementation.

The picture I'm painting here is one of a lack of coordination, and there is still no overall plan for cannabis from our government. We need a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that includes public reporting. This is exactly what the standing committee requested. Cabinet promised, and has yet to deliver. Mr. Speaker, where is the plan?

I will have questions for the Minister of Finance later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.