

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

### QUESTION 484-18(3): TOURISM REGULATION

October 31, 2018

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment; and my apologies, well, I can't.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Well, you can still raise your question. The Premier is here.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. I apologize, I did not give him much of a heads-up. Today I catalogued a number of concerns with the quality of the tourism products being offered and this government's ability to regulate the industry for the protection of tourists and our product reputation. Could the Minister briefly explain how the tourism licensing system operates and what consequences there are for persons operating without licensing? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. The Honourable Premier.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You cannot manage what you cannot count. Our licensing system allows us to know how many people are delivering tourism services, what they are, and what time of year their products are being delivered. It can help us measure growth, identify gaps, and guide our planning and investment. We also have legislation that determines which areas of tourism require licences.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Recent years have seen an explosion of tourism, and I believe the Minister talked about that in his statement earlier today, and a lot of this is related to aurora viewing. Can the Minister give us some idea in the growth in the number of Yellowknife operators and licences in recent years?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** This year, we have 151 tourism licence holders in the Northwest Territories. Last year, we had 147 tourism licence holders. Five years ago, we had 109 tourism licence holders.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I would like to thank the Premier for those numbers. So, a very significant growth, almost 50 percent it looks like. According to all indicators, the volume of visitors and the tourism operators will continue to grow. This raises some issues for me and other residents of the NWT around the adequacy and suitability of the measures that we use to regulate, inspect, and enforce our tourism licensing. In light of the issues that I raised earlier today and that are out in the media, what evaluation and possible legislative changes are needed to ensure we have the right tools in place to meet these challenges?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** I have been involved with the Department of ITI. In fact, I was the Minister, I think, for the first year of this government. We do not see this as a systemic problem, and I am not convinced that it is today. We are more interested in growing our industry and its capacity than we are in pursuing discipline, especially if there is apparently opportunity to turn it into growth. If we want to change this approach,

it would require changes to the Tourism Act, and I would expect that it would have to be done in the next Assembly.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I think I differ with the Premier's assessment of the state of the industry and our capacity to regulate it. My statement also mentioned the inadequacy of consumer protection laws. Here, tourism officers of course cannot sit around and read to see what kind of advertising and services are out there. It's important that we have a vigorous system to receive and investigate complaints and provide restitution where appropriate, and that includes, of course, the ability for tourists to hear back about complaints, even while they are here, in town. So can the Minister explain how our tourism-complaint system works and whether it's adequate as currently operates?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** As the Member knows, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs deals with consumer protection, so we work closely with MACA but primarily in areas of licensing accommodations in communities. In the area of enforcement, we work much more closely with the Department of Infrastructure and the City of Yellowknife and even the RCMP. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.