

## MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

### TOURISM REGULATION

October 31, 2018

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Recent CBC reports raise many concerns that tourism licensing, regulation, and enforcement is weak and ineffective, and that operations could pose a risk to tourists, to the reputation of the tourism industry, and even to personal safety.

The media reports are detailed and extensive, citing problems with individual operators and the ability of the GNWT to enforce its rules and correct operators who may be out there doing something that is not quite right.

Under the law, an operator must have a licence issued by the territorial government to take money from tour services. If operators are unlicensed, they are not obliged to follow safety rules nor have the proper insurance for their activities that can place tourists at a greater risk.

Media reports include many instances of operations providing poor tour experiences, including uninsured operations such as unsupervised canoeing. Instances of baiting wildlife to arrange photo ops for visitors have been reported, and we're all aware of the instances of road accidents, unsafe parking, and stranded tourists in and around Yellowknife.

I've also spoken in the past on the inadequacy of our consumer protection law. The case of a Yellowknife restaurant offering fish from Kazakhstan as local pickerel. Any policing of the tourism sector requires the ability to receive and investigate complaints in a timely fashion, and provide redress and restitution to customers who have not been fairly treated.

In the Hansard of October 18<sup>th</sup>, Small Business Day, the ITI Minister had this to say about tourism: "We are a victim of our own success. I have said that in this House before. Build it, and they will come. That is what happened around tourism, and that is what is happening particularly in the region of Yellowknife." As I can't fail to point out again, the commitment to building the tourism industry has not included a new visitors' information centre for Yellowknife, and according to these recent CBC reports, has not included an adequate capacity to regulate and protect the quality of the tourism industry.

As this government continues to promote tourism as economic diversification, we need to protect the quality of our product and ensure adequate regulation for the experience and safety of the visitors who come to Yellowknife and the NWT as a whole. I will have questions for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment later today.