

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

COORDINATION OF PARENTAL LEAVE BENEFITS WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

February 8, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. On October 11 of last year, I made a Member's statement on the issue of coordination of parental leave benefits with the changes to federal legislation that will improve these benefits.

These changes to the Canada Labour Code will provide a minimum of five weeks' paid leave for each parent. The changes were originally to come into effect on June 1, 2019, but the federal government recently moved up that effective date to March 17 of this year.

Amendments are required of our *Employment Standards Act* that will require employers to honour extended leave requests from their employees. I commend the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment for fast-tracking our public consultations on amendments to the Employment Standard Act, that closed on January 14, and the expanded scope of leave for domestic violence for caregivers and others as proposed by the department. Clearly, though, we will not be ready for the effective date of the federal legislation on March 17, 2019.

It is not clear how long it will take us to catch up to the federal government and ensure that our families are entitled to the same parental leave benefits as other Canadians. Such benefits clearly lead to stronger families, and I am disappointed that we did not coordinate our efforts more closely with what the federal government has been doing.

Although this is obviously a sensitive area, yet another method to ensure parents receive the best possible benefits would be for our government to unilaterally offer to amend collective agreements to ensure that our employees would have their jobs protected while away on the improved federal parental leave.

I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment later today to make sure that our families receive the best possible parental leave. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.