

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

**QUESTION 540-18(3):  
COORDINATION OF PARENTAL LEAVE BENEFITS WITH THE FEDERAL  
GOVERNMENT**

**February 11, 2019**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. First off, I would like to commend the Minister for fast-tracking public consultation on changes to the Employment Standards Act and to indicate my strong support for including domestic violence leave. The public consultation on this process ended January the 14<sup>th</sup>. Can the Minister tell us what the next steps are? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the compliment from the MLA. I appreciate that. Not only is it parental and family caregiver leave within this Act. We are looking at domestic violence that was brought up, but also domestic workers, for example, nannies, to make sure that they are covered as well. We did the stakeholders' consultation that was brought. We will be bringing forward the What We Heard document in March here, coming in, and then, right now, we are finalizing the legislative proposal at this moment.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks to the Minister for that. I have expressed my disappointment that we won't be able to meet the federal implementation date of the employment insurance changes on March the 17<sup>th</sup> for improved parental benefits in the Northwest Territories. Can the Minister tell us when we can expect to see amendments to our employment standards that come forward to this House?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** As stated earlier, we are just in the finalization of doing a What We Heard document and drafting up a legislative proposal. We are going to be introducing and bringing it forward in the next session of May to June, and then of course Members have the 120 days to take it out.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks to the Minister for that. Well, if I have anything to do with it, that bill is going to fly straight through here. Wow, I actually got an applause from the other side of the House for a change. One of the easiest ways we can extend and improve federal parental leave benefits to our employees is to mend relative collective agreements. I know that is a sensitive area right now, but can the Minister tell us whether our government has made an offer to the relevant unions to mend collective agreements to allow our employees to take full advantage of the improved parental leave benefits?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** The MLA actually answered his own question. At this moment, I cannot speak on anything happening with the union.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Well, thanks to the Minister for that. Look, I just want my colleagues in the House and the public to understand that there are some more steps that we have to do to make sure that our families and parents enjoy the best possible benefits. Lastly, Mr. Speaker, as our government is obviously going to lag behind the improved parental benefits offered by the federal government nationwide, I would like to ask the Minister what lessons we have learned from this experience to make sure that our families receive the best possible benefits in the future.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** I guess there are many lessons that come. One of the lessons is that life changes constantly. Don't get used to status quo because it changes all the time. That is something I have realized, and that is something we need to be conscious of within this House because that is what we are here for, to be abreast of it and to make changes. Another lesson I learned is, not only through this, work together. Work with your cross-jurisdictional, work with your partners in other jurisdictions and the federal government because it is important. A third lesson that I have learned is, even though I really want to work closely with the federal government, sometimes the federal government doesn't work on our schedule. I am not sure how to fix that because, of course, all jurisdictions have different sitting times, they have different voting times. It is an issue. I am glad our Senator is in the House. It could probably be brought forward. It would be wonderful to have more partnerships, more working together, whenever federal bills come out or acts come out that affect the jurisdictions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.