

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE UNIVERSITY FEASIBILITY AND BENEFITS STUDY

March 7, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. A lot has taken place on the renewal of post-secondary education since last year. Following the May 2018 release of the Aurora College Foundational Review, the Minister released her response to the report in October. That response endorsed the review's recommendation to transform Aurora College into a polytechnic university.

The City of Yellowknife was also quick to pursue the opportunities from the creation of a polytechnic university. A University/Post-Secondary Advisory Committee was created. Many prominent Yellowknifers volunteered to serve on this committee, representing independent research organizations, Indigenous governments, and the general public. A post-secondary education feasibility study was commissioned and released in January. It contains many valuable insights, going far beyond the foundational review in examining detailed issues of polytechnic composition, services, partnerships, and resourcing.

The report sees opportunities to specialize in areas where the NWT can be an educational leader, including programming aligned with NWT labour market needs. An expanded Yellowknife campus is necessary, with strong emphasis on marketing to attract the student population necessary for a university, and develop a distinctive research faculty.

Overall, the report envisages a polytechnic university as a driver of economic diversification, business incubation, and as a stabilizing economic presence as customer and service provider. I am also pleased to note that the City of Yellowknife has reached out to the towns of Fort Smith and Inuvik and jointly issued a news release on January 11 calling on our government to establish a clear vision for post-secondary education, specifically a polytechnic university in the Northwest Territories.

I am long on record in supporting the creation of a knowledge economy, and a northern university. I support the City of Yellowknife's efforts to pursue these opportunities for creation of an international-calibre university here in the Northwest Territories. I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.