

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

NWT ARTS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

August 15, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. The public and stakeholders consultations for the creation of an action plan for the NWT Arts Strategy have just wrapped up. ITI and ECE, who are leading this effort, say this work will now be added to research completed in March 2019 and result in action and new investments. I checked in with leaders in the arts sector who had input into the consultation, and I have not heard much positive as we work towards a fact-based, targeted action plan.

The problem is the lack of hard information specific to the producers and the NWT's operating environment. While government says it completed its research, sector players point out that, despite their pleas, comprehensive data has never been collected by survey of either individual artists and producers or the organizations offering cultural and performing arts products to the public.

We have national data about the NWT, which is impressive in itself. In 2017, the direct economic impact of cultural products was up 15 percent from 2010, estimated at \$77 million or \$1,723 per capita, in a sector directly employing 610 people. Impacts not revealed in that data are the contribution of cultural opportunities as part of the growing tourism sector or an evaluation of the impact of arts throughout the economy. The GNWT's own rough data from 2012 shows that, while a million dollars spent in oil and gas extraction results in only half a job, the same million dollars creates seven jobs in the film or recording industries, a 14-times-higher rate of return.

The lack of comprehensive data specific to the cultural and arts sector makes it that much more difficult to access bigger pots of funds with no cost to the NWT. Artist and organizations need hard numbers to write applications for funding under Heritage Canada and Canada Council for the Arts programs.

The problem in terms of creating a successful action plan for the Arts Strategy is that this data should have focused and driven the consultations, providing a fact-based evaluation of what's working and what's not. I will have questions later today for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on how we can collect the data needed to help support the expansion of our arts and cultural sector while accessing other funding sources. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.