

Replies to the Commissioner's Opening Address

August 23, 2019

MR. O'REILLY'S REPLY

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. It's not unusual for me to be a bit out of step with some of the other Members, here.

It has been my honour and privilege to serve the residents of Frame Lake, and indeed all the people of the Northwest Territories. It is an amazingly diverse riding. I've done my best to follow up on constituency matters, and hope to do the same in the 19th Assembly.

I need and want to acknowledge some people who have supported me, indeed all of us, while we've been here for the 18th Assembly. Most importantly, all of our families that loaned us to this great institution to make decisions on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories. Thanks to my wife, Suzette; daughter, Amber; and son, Rene.

Thanks to all our fantastic staff who keep this place ticking over for us all. They are the unsung heroes of democracy, and few will ever know the sacrifices and hard work that they have made for the Northwest Territories.

I wish to especially acknowledge my constituency assistant, Craig Yeo, for his dedication and hard work.

Thanks to my colleagues in this House. You have put up with a lot from me. I'm the slowest and pickiest eater, I have a healthy scepticism of some traditions, and I'm never at a loss for words, Mr. Speaker.

That being said, I think you would have to agree that I do my homework, and more; I've been honest and respectful; admitted mistakes; and remain open to persuasion and new ideas. People do not send us here to agree with each other. Differences are healthy and lead to better decisions, even if it is a difficult journey.

I especially want to recognize those Members who do not live in Yellowknife. You have carried a much larger burden. I have the luxury of going home every evening, even if it is very late sometimes, and being with my family and friends. Thanks to the Members from outside Yellowknife for the additional sacrifices you have made.

I wish to commend you, Mr. Speaker, for your promotion and support of all of our official languages. Merci, mahsi, marsi, quyanainni, and thank you. Special thanks to the interpreters, who help keep all our official languages alive.

We have accomplished a lot together: a binding code of conduct with an independent Integrity Commissioner; modernized elections, with more opportunities than ever to vote; support for women in leadership; and making this Assembly friendlier for those with young families. More of our committee business is conducted in public than ever before, and we have improved communications of our proceedings.

We have 911 service for the Northwest Territories; an Ombud for the Northwest Territories; a much-improved Corrections Act; leading-edge access to information and protection of privacy legislation; a new hospital, that just happens to be in the Frame Lake riding; serious planning towards a university for the Northwest Territories, to help us build a knowledge economy; new protected areas legislation that lays out a clear process and accountabilities; and a lot more, Mr. Speaker. Forgive me if I've forgotten anything significant.

Much work remains, including action on our climate and caribou crises; system-wide improvements to education; universal childcare; better services for our seniors; adequate, affordable, and suitable housing for all our citizens; completion of Indigenous land rights agreements; and lots more.

Whether we are here or not for the 19th Assembly, I am convinced that we will all continue to do our part to make the Northwest Territories the best that it can be. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.