

MEMBER'S STATEMENT — KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE
EDUCATION AUTHORITIES TERM OF OFFICE

February 6, 2020

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Over the last few months, Yellowknife MLAs met with trustees of Yellowknife Catholic schools and Yellowknife District No. 1 and the Commission scolaire francophone Territoires du Nord-Ouest. The City of Yellowknife held a plebiscite on extending the term of office for its councillors to four years from three in 2018. Of the Yellowknife voters who voted, 60.6 percent were in favour, and a bylaw to extend the term of office for mayor and council to four years was passed.

The term of office for Yellowknife City Council and Yellowknife Education Authorities are now out of sync. Elections were held at the same time, piggybacking onto the city's efforts and processes. If Yellowknife Education Authorities need to hold their own elections, the costs will be approximately \$90,000 more, in terms of advertising, hiring workers, and other expenses. I am sure that we would all rather see that funding spent on our children's education than on running a separate election.

For CSFTNO, the situation is more interesting in that half of its commissaires are from 10 Yellowknife, where there is now a four-year term for council, and the other half are from Hay River, where there is a three-year term for that local government. CSFTNO holds its own elections, if necessary, at its schools, so there is little additional cost but an obvious need for coordination.

Unfortunately, it looks like it would take a change to the Education Act to adjust the terms of office for education authorities to account for the four-year term of Yellowknife City Council. The current wording in the Education Act already contemplates coordination of the terms of office. However, it does not deal with the situation that we are now in, where a local government body has a term of office beyond three years or, for CSFTNO, where there are different terms of office for the local governments that its commissaires represent.

I raised this issue almost a year ago and was told by then-Minister of Education, "The good news is that we have a couple of years until the next election [...] so that we can actually have it dealt with before the election."

I will be asking the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment questions later today on whether the political will exists to make the necessary changes before 2021. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.