

MEMBER'S STATEMENT — KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

Great Potato Collaboration

June 9, 2020

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I had a chance to get my hands really dirty on the weekend. We drove down to the Northern Farm Training Institute, or NFTI, near Hay River to volunteer. On the first morning, we built trellises for pumpkins and squash, but in the afternoon we each bagged about 1,000 pounds of potatoes.

The Great Potato Collaboration is now under way. NFTI put out a call for potatoes for the NWT during the pandemic to help build food security. The Potato Growers of Alberta helped identify one of its members, Sunnycrest Farms, that could help. John and Marlene Ekkel own Sunnycrest Farm in Lacombe, and answered the call by agreeing to give 50,000 pounds of seed potatoes to NFTI. That's more than a pound of seed potatoes for each person in the Northwest Territories. What a tremendous gift, thank you.

When we were at NFTI, we bagged potatoes for Aklavik and brought some back to Yellowknife for the Inuvik Greenhouse. Virtually every community will get some of the seed potatoes, and several transport companies have agreed to carry them for free. Our staycation at NFTI included a comfortable yurt and some meals with volunteers from France, Germany and Canada. NFTI is doing a fantastic job of building food security and deserves greater investment from this government.

While we were in Hay River, we christened the brand new Porritt's Landing picnic area and fire pits with some whitefish provided by the Honourable Member for Hay River South. He was right as the lake shore proved to be too cold for us with ice near shore, but we still had an excellent dinner.

During our travels, we visited Fort Providence where huge candling ice slabs flowed down the Dehcho, tinkling along the way. We would like to thank Russell Chase who showed us his rabbit farm near Enterprise. We also had a chance to discuss how GNWT could better support food security. We had a quick tour of Kakisa, which I had not visited in over a decade. Black bears, bison, sandhill cranes, and other birds were spotted along the way.

More seriously, Mr. Speaker, our trip reminded me of what a great place we live in and the tremendous tourism opportunities we should better promote this summer. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.