

## SECOND READING OF BILLS —KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

### BILL 19: AN ACT TO AMEND THE STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ACT November 3, 2020

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, be read for the second time. This bill amends the Student Financial Assistance Act to prohibit the inclusion of student's personal information in the public accounts, notwithstanding the Financial Administration Act. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madame la Presidente. Yes. I wish to speak to the principle of this bill. The current practice is that, of course, we provide good assistance and support for our students when they go off to study in post-secondary institutions, and that's a good thing. We also want to encourage them to come back to the Northwest Territories, and we have a loan remission program, and I think that is a way to ensure that our investment is protected. We want our students to come back here to the Northwest Territories.

The problem has been, in my view, that, when they come back to the Northwest Territories, the remissions that the individual students receive have been reported publicly with their individual names in the public accounts now for a number of years. That practice takes up space in the public accounts and has been characterized by some as an invasion of the students' privacy. The Standing Committee on Government Operations in the last Assembly reported several times and recommended that this practice stop, that it was an unnecessary disclosure of the students' private information. There was correspondence between the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Comptroller General that I tabled in the last Assembly, as well, on this matter.

In working through it, it appeared that the best way to stop this practice was to actually amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, so I want to commend the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment for working with me as an individual Member to bring forward this change. It's something that I support and have worked toward for several years, so I'm very pleased to see this come forward today. I want to commend the Minister, again, and I think this is an illustration of how consensus government can truly work. Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

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**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson):** Thank you, Minister, and our thanks to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. I will ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to introduce the bill.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am here today to present Bill 19, An Act

to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. This bill seeks to amend the act to prohibit the disclosure of personal information of individuals who have successfully applied for remission of student loans. The proposed amendment, by forbidding the publication of personal information, will protect the privacy of successful applicants to the student loan remission program. This will allow residents to take advantage of the remission program without having their names published in the public accounts or any other public documents.

I am pleased to bring forward this amendment that addresses the recommendations of stakeholders, including the Standing Committee on Government Operations, in 2017. I want to thank Member for Frame Lake in particular for raising this issue time and time again, and thank Committee for fast-tracking the bill this sitting. This concludes my opening remarks, and I would be pleased to answer any questions that Members may have regarding Bill 19. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson):** Minister, would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Yes, I would.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson):** Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Minister, please introduce your witnesses.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I would like to introduce Mr. Michael Saturnino, the assistant deputy minister of Labour and Income Security, and Ms. Mikaela Robertson, legislative counsel with the Department of Justice.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 19. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I want to keep this really brief. Again, I want to thank the Minister and his staff for working collaboratively on this issue and bringing this forward in a timely fashion and all my colleagues for agreeing to expedite this so that we don't have to publish the names and amounts of student loan remissions in future public accounts. Thanks again to the Minister for his work on this. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson):** Thank you, Member. Is the committee agreed that there are no further general comments?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson):** Can we proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson):** Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page 1 of the bill.

---Clauses 1 and 2 inclusive approved

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson):** Committee, to the bill as a whole. Does

committee agree that Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, is now ready for third reading?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson):** Thank you, committee. Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, is now ready for third reading. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.