

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

FOOD SECURITY

November 5, 2020

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. Food security can generally be defined as having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable and nutritious food. The 2019-2023 mandate of this government identifies actions to support food security with food industry development, increasing country food harvesting, and improving Nutrition North. We have an agriculture strategy called "The Business of Food," a name that implies the largely commercial focus of its initiatives. These are helpful, but the almost exclusive focus on agriculture as a business will not necessarily lead to food security. We have a lot of work to do and a lot of questions to answer.

COVID had brought the issue of food security to the forefront. This summer, the requirements for social distancing and isolation prompted many more people to grow their own food in home and community gardens and to get out on the land and water and harvest country foods. In the NWT, we did experience some disruptions to our supply chains through the cancellation of flights and reductions in trucking. What lessons did we learn from this past harvest, and was our government there to support this convergence of interest and necessity of local food production during the pandemic?

There have been some incredible examples of food security in the NWT over the last season, including the Great Potato Collaboration with the donation of 50,000 pounds of seed potatoes by an Alberta farmer and the development of a local market garden in Kam Lake on a basic gravel pad.

It's hard to know how successful our current programs and supports are towards food security when there appears no clear measurement of agricultural or country food production and consumption by our Bureau of Statistics. If you don't measure it, how can we gauge the effectiveness of even our current focus on agri-business? I'll have questions for the Minister of ITI on how we can build real food security in the NWT, learn from the lessons of the pandemic, and ensure we can actually measure progress. Mahsi, Madame la Presidente.