

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

POVERTY REPORT CARD

March 3, 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. The first Northwest Territories Poverty Report Card was released by Alternatives North in November 2020. I've reviewed it, and it's hard to summarize in a few words. The ones that come to mind are "overwhelming" and "shocking." I can't possibly hope to do the report justice, but suffice it to say that income disparity between rich and poor, small communities and larger centres, and within communities continues to be a huge problem that the COVID pandemic has only highlighted and, in some cases, made worse.

The GNWT has had an Anti-Poverty Strategy since 2013 but has done little more than monitor indicators of poverty. I want to highlight the recommendations from the report:

- it is time to assess the GNWT's poverty reduction strategies;
- GNWT needs to regularly review data collection and outputs to reflect changing conditions;
- long-term solutions are needed, such as a basic guaranteed income, a living wage, and economic restructuring;
- lone-parent families and children should be the highest priority for poverty reduction;
- measurements of poverty, including living wage and market-basket measures, need to be expanded to better inform solutions;
- food insecurity has been highlighted by the pandemic and needs to be urgently addressed;
- immediate action is needed to overcome housing problems throughout the NWT; and
- reconciliation needs to be part of poverty reduction.

I am dismayed that, once again, a small non-governmental organization is doing the work of this government. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services on our poverty-reduction efforts and responses to the recommendations provided in the first report card on poverty in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.