

KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

**MOTION 37-19(2):
CREATION OF A NORTHWEST TERRITORIES FOOD SECURITY STRATEGY,
CARRIED**

June 4, 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President.

Whereas this 19th Assembly agreed in its priorities to increase food security through locally produced, harvested, and affordable food;

And whereas the Northwest Territories has the second highest level of food insecurity in Canada as defined by Statistics Canada;

And whereas in a 2018 survey of Northwest Territories residents, 23 percent were worried about not having enough food -- money for food and in some communities, it was greater than 50 percent;

And whereas the Northwest Territories' food system is extremely fragile and dependent on global markets, which the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the forefront, including our reliance on imported food; near complete dependence on corporately-owned grocery stores to feed residents; critical dependence on winter roads, trucking industry, and aviation sector to re-supply communities; unknown food storage in community-based freezers, fridges, and pantries; our unlimited -- or our uncertain and limited food supply chains and lack of systemic incentives that encourage territorial food solutions; whereas the federal government is yet to make the fundamental changes to the Nutrition North program that will best assist Northwest Territories residents with food security;

And whereas there are gaps in our current food security initiatives and the lack of coordination in current programs and services that cut across several departments; and whereas there is a need for a variety of programs, services, legislative and regulatory changes required to increase support for community and family renewable resource harvesting, availability of lands for agricultural purposes, support for small-scale food production; education and training in food production and storage and clear guidance for the preparation and retail of locally-produced products and more,

Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that the Government of the Northwest Territories develop a Food Security Strategy by engaging Northwest Territories residents, harvesters, and agricultural producers, develop a coordinated and comprehensive approach to programs and services with specific targets, actions and timelines;

And, further, that the Premier appoint a Minister responsible for Food Security to lead this work; and, furthermore, that the Food Security Strategy include the following:

- The Government of the Northwest Territories prioritize the development of a Food Security Strategy based on lessons learned from community-based food security initiatives and to complete this strategy in 12 to 18 months;
- The Government of the Northwest Territories begin interdepartmentally advancing food security by identifying principles for NWT food security over the next four months;
- The Government of the Northwest Territories coordinate the income assistance review with the development of a Northwest Territories Food Security Strategy to ensure the most vulnerable residents have access to affordable and nutritious food;
- The Government of the Northwest Territories review the effectiveness of all Government of the Northwest Territories food security funding programs as based on the principles for achieving Northwest Territories food security and to revise program funding where necessary over six to 12 months;
- The Government of the Northwest Territories implement community-based food security coordinators in the most food insecure communities in the Northwest Territories;
- The Government of the Northwest Territories remove all of its legislative regulatory barriers over the next 12 months to facilitate regional sharing of harvested meat or other products -- other food products;
- The Government of the Northwest Territories pilot an initiative immediately that improves the effectiveness of community-based freezers, kitchens, and food preparation and food -- food -- storage programs in the highest risk communities and use this experience to inform the development of the food security strategy;
- The Government of the Northwest Territories develop and implement tracking of local food production, set specific targets to improve food security; and,
- The Government of the Northwest Territories develop and implement a Northwest Territories food security website with email and phone contacts immediately so there is a clear point of contact in the Government of the Northwest Territories to track community concerns and advance initiatives; and, furthermore,

That the Government respond to this motion within 120 days. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. It's been a long week. I'm not going to take up too much time, but I just -- I want to encourage all Members of the House to support this. I've heard a couple of concerns raised about this - how much is this going to cost. I would actually ask how much is it -- would it cost if we don't do this? We need to ensure that our residents have access to food, nutritious food, affordable food, not just now during this pandemic but into the future as well. So what's the cost of not doing this?

The other concern I guess that I've heard raised is that the government is already doing this work. Well, if that work is underway, it hasn't been communicated very well to this side of the House. What we have received is a rather long laundry list of initiatives that

are underway that may increase food security, but what we really need is better coordination and leadership, and what we suggest here is that there be a Minister appointed to lead this up, a Minister responsible for Food Security. So I would encourage all my colleagues to support this motion. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thanks.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the priorities of this Assembly was to increase food security to locally produced, harvested, and affordable food. There was a number of mandate commitments made in there. And I -- my experience as a Member is that that mandate item is presently the responsibility of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Health and Social Services, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the Department of Lands. And I've asked many questions about food security, and I've found it very difficult to try and get those departments to coordinate on the importance of this issue. And I asked this of the prior 19th Assembly. I think it's safe to say that all Members believe in food security, and we saw the fragility of our supply lines during COVID-19, and, really, we don't want to live in a territory where children go hungry because a hungry child can't be educated. It sets them up for the rest of their lives. So food security is a priority. And I believe that we've set out some clear and tangible solutions. We've perhaps asked for a couple of the timelines in the mandate to be kicked up a little faster and made this a bit more of a priority. But I'm happy to support this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Motion is in order. To the motion. Government House Leader.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, food security is a priority of this government. This Cabinet and the Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes food security as an issue that is foundationally important to the health and well-being of the people of the NWT.

The mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories includes a commitment to increase food security through locally produced, harvested, and affordable food. Work is advancing to address these aspects of food insecurity throughout the territory. As a result of this mandate, partner departments are collaborating to build common momentum and create tangible progress on food security associated with poverty, building the territorial agriculture and fisheries sector, supporting access to traditional foods, and creating the regulatory regime needed to support all of this.

While there is still much -- while there was much work already being done, we acknowledge that there is still more to do, and we are committed to doing that work, and Cabinet fully supports the principles behind this motion; however, as this motion contains a recommendation to government, it is convention that Cabinet abstains from the vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Government House Leader. Motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Member's requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Thebacha.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Nahendeh. The Member for the Sahtu. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. There's also the recorded vote. Five in favour, zero opposed, five abstentions. Motion is carried.

---Carried

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