

## **MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE**

### **EXPANSION OF MIDWIFERY SERVICES**

**March 1, 2016**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I too had the pleasure of greeting some of the midwifery representatives over the noon hour. It was early in the last Assembly when, after much advocacy, work began on establishing a strong regional and capital city midwifery program. There were demonstrations, petitions, letter writing, and other campaigns. A commitment was made to expand the Fort Smith program to Hay River, the Beaufort Delta, Behchoko, and Yellowknife. A start was made and we have since seen progress in Hay River and Fort Smith.

In July 2015, the Minister said that the next goal was to move forward with the territorial model based out of Yellowknife in 2015/16 so that the full rollout could be done in 2016/17. The Minister stated in July 2015 that he was still committed to introducing midwifery services based in Yellowknife, and would expand the program into the regions starting with the Deh Cho region and Behchoko. The Beaufort Delta has since reconsidered this approach, I am told, but that still leaves Yellowknife, the Deh Cho, and Behchoko.

In Yellowknife, I am informed that we now have a midwife coordinator position, but the coordinator has no midwives to coordinate. Progress to date has been poor. Delivery on commitments that the advocates fought so hard for is still lacking. I would like to point out that, quite apart from establishing a model for obstetrical care preferred and asked for by many mothers and families, this just makes plain fiscal sense, as my colleague just mentioned. The government laments the sorry state of its finances, yet we still have a delivery program for birthing that is not as cost-effective as it might be. Once rolled out regionally, this approach offers major savings in patient transportation and accommodation costs, and the establishment of midwifery services rejuvenates the cultural traditions of community birthing by expert mothers and matriarchs.

Midwifery advocates who fought so hard for these commitments by government are understandably disappointed by the failure to deliver on promises, as we saw outside the Assembly earlier today. Mothers-to-be across the Northwest Territories want to have their babies with the assistance of well-trained midwives.

Mothers-to-be across the Northwest Territories want to have their babies with the assistance of well-trained midwives who are supported by a comprehensive, stable, and well-funded midwifery program in all of the regional centres across the Northwest Territories. For the sake of our young families, I hope the Minister will confirm real progress and certainty on moving forward with midwifery in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.