

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

MIDWIFERY SERVICES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

June 8, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Today, I'd like to talk about the long saga of midwifery services in the Northwest Territories, based upon the latest updates provided by the Minister of Health and Social Services. In 2012, the Government responded to advocacy for community-based midwifery services with a Midwifery Review and Expansion Analysis Report. That report recommended options for expansion of midwifery services under community, regional and territorial models. In July 2015, the Minister said that the next goal was to move forward with a territorial model based out of Yellowknife in 2015-16, so that the full rollout could be done in 2016-17. The exact nature of a territorial model was not defined in that 2012 report. And work on creating the territorial model appears to be stalled.

To move it forward, two consultants were brought on in 2015 to flesh out the concept. Midwife positions were created and staffed in Hay River and Fort Smith, rather than two Inuvik staff positions, the Beaufort Delta health authority decided to pursue other care models. Positions proposed for Yellowknife and Behchoko have yet to be funded. That's my understanding of where we are today.

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 and Behchoko.

The word midwife does not appear anywhere in our 2016-17 budget, so there's been little progress on this issue. Recently, the Health Minister told midwifery advocates that, "The consultation process is currently being developed for the territorial midwifery program and consultation will take place during the fall/winter of 2016. Once completed, a proposal for territorial midwifery program will be reviewed and considered."

Mr. Speaker, we're at least five years along from that decision that led to a 2012 report and recommendations. The 2015 work on two dedicated consultants has resulted in a proposal for further consultation in fall/winter 2016-17. That means that any incorporation into business plans is kicked down to at least 2018-19. I'll have questions for the minister.