

**KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE**  
**Reducing Use of LOCUMS**  
**Committee of the Whole—2018-2019 Operating Budget Review**  
**Dept. of Health and Social Services—February 28, 2018**

**MR. O'REILLY:** There is, I think, a 5 per cent reduction of locums used in the business plan here, and that is supposed to save \$900,000. Can someone just explain to me what this is about and how we can anticipate that somehow these locums, their work is going to be reduced by 5 per cent? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Mr. Chair, the \$900,000 is as a result of work that we have already done. We have brought all of the medical professionals under a single authority, and we have been able to get some economies to scale as far as recruitment. We have actually, I think, done better than we have in the past under recruitment. We have more stability in Hay River and Inuvik than we have in many, many years, and as a result we have seen a decrease in locum use, but we are always going to need locums, Mr. Chair. I mean, there are times when our staff go on holidays or have to go out for training, or sometimes, unfortunately, they do retire or leave and we have to back-fill in a short period. We are still struggling in some areas. There is no question. We are having a hard time finding permanency in places like the Deh Cho, the Sahtu, Fort Smith, but we are hoping to continue as a single medical system. We are hoping to see some benefits there, but we have already recognized savings and do see them in this budget. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank, Mr. Chair. How is that going to be tracked and reported on? Is that something that we are going to see in the business plan next year? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is as a base adjustment to the budget, so you won't see these dollars showing up in future years. The role of the recruitment of physicians is also going to be part of the territorial health authority, so you probably won't see it specifically. We are comfortable right now with the changes we have made and the improvements we have seen that we will be able to control our spending in this area a little bit better than we have in the past, and we do not feel we need this \$900,000 at this point. Should things radically change, we will certainly be prepared to have a discussion at this point, but we are trying really hard to be a little more creative here. We have approached U of A about some residency options here in the Northwest Territories as well as some outreach work that the medical students at U of A could do to get into small communities which is consistent with some of the recommendations in the TRC report. We are trying to create exposure and awareness of the North to potential practitioners. We are hoping that will result in more stability, even more stability than we are seeing over the last couple of years. It is

a work in progress. I think it will always ebb and flow, but I think we are in a good place now with a single medical system. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, that is helpful to know. This is the predicted savings. I guess I am just trying to figure out next year, a year from now, business plans in the fall. I will ask then: how did the prediction work out? Is that something the department intends to sort of report on somehow in the business plan for next year, where we are at and how we are doing with the anticipated reduced use of locums? I am just wondering where that is going to be reported and tracked, or do I just have to ask at the next business plan? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Given that the role of hiring and tracking physicians is going to be a part of the territorial authority, they will be the ones that will be compiling that information. I will certainly, through the deputy, have a conversation with the CEO to make sure that is the type of data we are monitoring and so we can see how we are doing.

I will caution the Member: don't expect to see radical changes in year one or two. We have already recognized some improvements. In order to get real trending data on this, give us a few years to get some trending data. We can give you year to year, but I am not sure that is really going to tell you what you want to know. Trending data will give us better results over time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I believe in transformation, as well, but I have a line item in a budget now that says you are going to reduce the expenditures by \$900,000. If FNB doesn't come after you, I will ask the same question next year. Fair enough.