

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

MIDWIFERY PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

February 28, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I will return again to a program which has probably had one of the longest gestation periods in the history of this Assembly: midwifery. I have recounted in past statements a history which stretches back to 2012 when public advocacy prompted the government to commission a midwifery review and expansion analysis report. Options for implementation were developed leading up to a full rollout in 2016-2017.

In 2015, the Minister said he was still committed to introducing midwifery, but with no money, a further study and public consultation would take place. Another study was completed, and not surprisingly, stakeholder feedback is again strongly in favour of expansion of midwifery services and improved maternal care. As to concrete plans for launching a service, there is nothing in the latest report or the 2018-2019 budget.

The department responded to committee questions by saying it is getting ready to prepare to begin to develop a program. A senior midwifery consultant has been hired. That position is laying the groundwork for future action by the Advisory Committee on Midwifery, including its role and establishment of a territorial midwifery program.

As to new midwives providing birthing support, nothing yet. One bright light is that, effective June 2017, women who must leave their communities for birth can now have an escort accompanying them. This is not a solution, as we are doubling on travel and accommodation costs for escorts where a good part of this money could be spent on implementing midwifery.

For the third budget, now, I am back asking questions about midwifery. The Minister champions system transformation, and now is the time to get on board with midwifery.

I will have questions for the Minister of Health on the concrete next steps to finally live up to the promises on the expansion of midwifery in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker