# ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

## QUESTION 181-18(3): MIDWIFERY PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

### FEBRUARY 28, 2018

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I would like the Minister of Health and Social Services to give us the current state of affairs on development and implementation of midwifery services on a regional and territorial basis. Given that the latest on midwifery does not present a solid path or timeline towards a Northwest Territories midwifery program, what concrete steps are being taken by the Minister to implement midwifery across the Northwest Territories? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Department of Health and Social Services are still supportive of midwifery services. It is a mandate item of the Government of the Northwest Territories. The report was completed with 16 recommendations. We agree with all 16 recommendations. We are now moving forward with the program design. We're moving forward on the recommendations that were made. We're looking to develop a territorial midwifery program that meets the needs of residents throughout the Northwest Territories. This will include building and strengthening the existing two community-based midwifery programs, but also working with other providers such as community health nurses and others to roll out midwifery.

We're hoping to be ready to roll out midwifery services in the last year of this Assembly. It will go through the normal business processes and be discussed with committee as we begin that official roll-out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I would like to thank the Minister for his response. He sort of answered my next question. I believe he said that he was starting to put together the proposal for a territorial midwifery program. Is that something that he can share with the standing committee, and when would he be in a position to do that?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** We actually have hired a midwifery consultant and we are working with the different midwives in the Northwest Territories to help strengthen the existing services, but our territorial consultants are also working with us to update our procedures and our guidelines to make sure that they're current and they make sense. Those are building upon the recommendations.

I'm happy to have a meeting with committee if committee so desires to walk through where we are and where we're going and where we hope to be by the end of this Assembly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Once again, I would like to thank the Minister for that commitment. I look forward to sitting in on that briefing. A number of training standards certification issues have been identified in past reports on midwifery. Can the Minister tell me what steps are being taken now and with what partners to ensure training and administrative

oversight needs are in place to launch the programming once it is funded?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** As I've already indicated, there was a report done. There were 16 recommendations. We've supported all 16 recommendations and we're moving forward.

The expanded program will allow for a continuity of maternity care and enable greater clinical support for residents of the Northwest Territories. One of the things that's being done right now is the NWT Midwifery Framework. It has been revised and we're entering the final stages of that approval. That includes the work that we're doing on guidelines to make sure that the guidelines are current and that they stay current. Many of these things will evolve over time as new science and new technology comes forward, but we're working on those guidelines now.

We have brought in the consultant, as I said, who is doing a significant amount of work on future design. As I said, I'm happy to meet with committee. I would suggest maybe after session would probably be best, to give us a little bit more time to get through the next couple of weeks. I'm happy to meet with committee to walk through where we're going, where we are, and where we hope to be in the life of this Assembly.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le Président. Again, I want to thank the Minister for that. I'm sure that he will think about or would probably be able to give that briefing to committee in public, as I know there are a lot of interested folks across the Northwest Territories that would be curious to hear him make that presentation.

The Minister has spoken in the past about how we do have a bit of a complicated health system here with the NWT Health and Social Services Agency. There's the Tlicho Community Services Agency, Hay River Health and Social Services Authority. How has the Minister starting to work with these other agencies that are responsible for delivery of programs across the Northwest Territories in the hope of designing and implementing a program on midwifery? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Ultimately we see them being a part of the single system here. We do recognize that there are some unique realities in our healthcare system with two separate boards. We hope to bring Hay River into the public service at some point. Until that happens, there is a midwife representative from the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority on the territorial midwifery expansion working group. They are participating in a design and participating in the work that is needed to be done before we could actually roll out a midwifery program.

We've also been engaging with the TCSA on the midwifery program expansion. We're planning to do more of that in the coming weeks and in the coming months. It's a little different, obviously, because of the structure that did exist with the TCSA, but they've been very open to working with us on being a part of a single system in the Northwest Territories. We expect they'll have some issues they want to address. We'll certainly work with them to address the issues that they raise. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.