

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MIDWIFERY PROGRAM

March 11, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I rise today to make my fourth annual midwifery statement. The Northwest Territories Midwifery Program has one of the longest gestation periods in the history of this Assembly, but now there is some good news to report.

In response to my questioning during the Committee of the Whole review of the Department of Health and Social Services budget earlier in this sitting, there is now confirmation of new 2019-2020 funding of \$373,000 for three positions. One of them is a full-time midwifery clinical specialist and a three-quarter-time midwife position, both in Yellowknife, and a three-quarter midwife position for Hay River. The total spending on midwifery for 2019-2020 will be \$1.789 million, which will be a very good investment with huge payoffs in deferred or avoided costs.

For 2019-2020, there will be a total complement of 8.5 full-time-equivalent midwifery staff in the Northwest Territories. The department says that this makes for one of the most robust midwifery programs in the country, measured against 15 total positions in Saskatchewan and the Maritime provinces with a combined total of 13. A Northwest Territories midwifery program means mothers having children in their home communities, with decreased travel costs, the benefits of pre- and post-natal care, and a healthcare model completely in tune with community health centres and reconciliation. Good news, indeed.

In applauding this program, I have to give a great deal of credit to midwifery advocates who have lobbied long and faithfully for these results. We go back to the last Assembly in 2012, when public advocacy prompted the government to commission a Midwifery Review and Expansion Analysis Report. Since then, I have personally attended at least two midwifery demonstrations out in front of this building.

Although it has taken more than seven years to get here, I also want to recognize the work of successive Ministers of Health and their staff, especially the current Minister, who went to the well with what must have been a convincing business case to secure the resources to see this through.

I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services later today about making sure that we get this good news on midwifery out to all of our citizens and publicly report on further implementation and progress. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.