

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

### QUESTION 676-18(3): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MIDWIFERY PROGRAM

March 11, 2019

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. In remarks in Committee of the Whole the other day, there used to be an additional \$373,000 for midwifery in 2019-2020, bringing the total resources devoted to midwifery to \$1.78 million. There used to be a staff complement of 8.5 full-time-equivalent people. Could the Minister of Health and Social Services summarize where these positions will be located and how services will be offered to other communities? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There already are a number of midwifery positions that exist in both Fort Smith and Hay River. The new positions that are being established, there are 2.5 positions in total. One of the positions is going to be the territorial midwifery clinical specialist position, and this position will provide some coordination and consistent program guidance midwifery services that exist across the Northwest Territories. They will also be responsible for engaging the clinical governance and quality assurance activities within the authority and liaise with the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority for this exact same purpose.

We also are establishing a 0.5 midwifery position in Hay River, and this position is going to be added to the existing complement, and this position will ensure the sustainability of the current services in Hay River, but will also do some of the groundwork for rolling out midwifery services and supports to communities like Fort Resolution and other communities in the Deh Cho. We also have a 0.75 position that we are establishing here in Yellowknife, and this position will work with the territorial midwifery clinical specialist and other primary health practitioners to lay the groundwork for integrated midwifery services here in the capital, but also for rolling out midwifery services throughout the rest of the territories as part of the territorial model. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that and I am certainly interested in finding out more about how the services are going to be expanded to all our communities. I am not aware of any plans to monitor and evaluate the new Northwest Territories midwifery program and publicly report implementation and overall progress. Can the Minister describe how the NWT midwifery program will be monitored and evaluated, and how the results will be publicly reported?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** The department has received approval for a monitoring framework that outlines a plan to monitor the assurances at the following three levels, at the three levels we are doing our work; the Legislative Assembly on behalf of the public of the Northwest Territories, the department, and the authority.

At the Legislative Assembly level, monitoring involves indicators of interest to the public, such as increased access to safe, qualified midwifery care as close to home as

possible, and reporting at this level will be made public through the Legislative Assembly and through the Minister's office. Department-level monitoring involves indicators that show the territorial midwifery program is meeting best practices and standards as well as in-existence regular auditing mechanisms, and then the authority-level monitoring involves indicators that inform authority leadership on how to improve the quality and efficiency of programs. So there are multiple things that are being done to monitor the effectiveness of this program to ensure that any enhancements and changes are evidence-based and in the best interest of the residents and the programs.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that, and I would encourage him to share that framework with the standing committee. Families have been advocating for midwifery for years, mostly mothers such as Leslie Paulette, Wendy Lahey, and Joanna Thiemmesen. How will the role of these public partners be continued as we roll out these services and evaluate their delivery?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** As the Member so accurately described in his Member's statement, there has been a lot of work done on this, a lot of years on this, and certainly been a lot of advocacy in this particular area. Public feedback received through the 2017 midwifery stakeholder engagement process has informed the work of the advisory committee on midwifery to help it develop the process and the approach to midwifery expansion. The advocates and consumers were specifically targeted in this engagement. The advisory committee, which included representation from the authorities and the Midwifery Association, are going to continue to provide input into the expansion process. The department will continue to work with the authority in the expansion of midwifery services and will continue to work with clients who are interested in receiving these services to make sure that we develop a program that is strong and meaningful.

To prepare for some of the regional expansion, the Hay River midwifery program, the department, as I said, has received some one-time funding from the federal government to start engaging communities, traditional knowledge-keepers, and care providers in the South Slave and the Deh Cho regions, and this work will just continue to lead to help bolster and strengthen midwifery services as we roll out a territorial program here in the Northwest Territories.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that information and his good work on the file. Lastly, I think I have done my part in trying to share some of the good news about a Northwest Territories midwifery program, but I think that a lot more could be done to promote this significant achievement, so can the Minister tell us what plans his department has to communicate and promote a Northwest Territories midwifery program? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** A communications plan will be developed in collaboration with the health authorities to inform the public and other stakeholders of the expanded services and how this change will gradually increase access to services during the first few years of implementation. I do want to point out and note that expansion of midwifery services is envisioned as a process that will be phased in over several years. This is

year one of a multi-year rollout, and of course, it is going to be incredibly important that, as we roll out different phases and steps, we make sure that the public understands what these services are, how to access them, and what benefits they will bring. So that will all be incorporated in the communications plans as we roll out over the next several years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.