

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

MIDWIFERY SERVICES

October 28, 2020

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Here's a familiar topic for my Member's statements: midwifery. This is the 13th time I've raised it as an MLA. I certainly won't try to summarize the delays and excuses that still leave us far short of the much-promised territorial Midwifery Program, but I will try to nail down where we are today and hopefully learn how this essential service will finally be delivered to all Northwest Territories families.

Work on creating a full midwifery program began in 2013. Progress was slow and lead up to a 2017 Northwest Territories midwifery stakeholder engagement, which identified gaps in midwifery care and devised a territorial midwifery program model. Priorities for action included strengthening the existing midwifery teams in Fort Smith and Hay River, expanding the Hay River Midwifery Program to provide services in the Deh Cho and South Slave regions, developing a territorial midwifery recruitment and retention plan, and creating a territorial midwifery program based in Yellowknife with the capacity to support regions, including Behchoko. 2018 multi-year funding was to initiate the program in 2019-2020 and implement it over three years.

Staffing has been late and stalled. A territorial manager was hired in March of this year, and support staffing is underway. Although it was apparently delayed by the move to the new Stanton hospital and COVID. The department says that implementation of the planned Deh Cho service have been delayed by staffing difficulties and South Slave community consultations have been delayed by the restrictions on community gatherings due to the pandemic.

In 2019, the government approved year one funding for two new positions at the NTHSSA: the territorial manager; and the lead for the territorial Midwifery Program. I'll be watching for approval of subsequent funds in next year's operating budget. In response to my request for an update, the department outlined at least eight major organizational, policy, and recruitment tasks leading us to the promised territorial program. Progress has been slow, Mr. Speaker, far too slow, in my opinion. Later today, I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services on a definite plan to bring the option of midwifery to all families in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.