

MEMBER'S STATEMENT – GREAT SLAVE -- FEBRUARY 17, 2009

**HEALTH PROFESSION LEGISLATION**

Today I'd like to follow up on some questions asked by my colleague from Yellowknife Centre asked during Committee of the whole last week.

Specifically, questions on the lack of Health Professional Legislation in the Northwest Territories.

Currently a number of health providers working within the NWT are not required to have an NWT license. In some cases such as Chiropractors, Massage Therapists and Naturopathic Doctors there is no legislation or regulations that ensure individuals providing these services are adequately trained or meet certain safety requirements before they can legally provide their brand of services in the NWT.

Last year I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services a number of questions on this topic. At that time, I was informed by the Minister that the Department was investigating the feasibility of "Umbrella" legislation that will accommodate various health professions rather than stand-alone legislation for each profession. This makes some sense to me.

Other jurisdictions with similar challenges as the NWT currently have this type of Umbrella Legislation. The Yukon is one example. Implementing umbrella legislation in the NWT should be pursued. Unfortunately, we have an extensive list of legislative initiatives to pursue within the GNWT and the Minister indicated that, although it's on the list of legislation to pursue and research, this particular legislation is not high on the priority list

and we won't likely see it come forward during the life of this 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly.

I understand workload and setting priorities. However, we also have to acknowledge that things change. In December 2008, the Minister of Labour across Canada signed an Enhanced Labour Mobility Agreement to be implemented on April 1, 2009. In January 2009, the Premiers ratified the changes.

Mr. Speaker, the revised Labour Mobility Chapter of the Agreement on Internal Trade provides that any worker certified for an occupation by a regulatory authority of one province or territory is to be recognized as qualified for that occupation by all other provinces and territories where that occupation is regulated. Without legislation regulating these professions the enhanced mobility provided by this new enhanced labour mobility could make the NWT a less attractive place for these professionals to work as they can have their credentials recognized almost everywhere else in the country, except the NWT.

To me the changes to the Enhanced Labour Mobility Agreement are a reason for the Minister of Health and Social Services to reconsider the Department's legislative priorities and move forward with the umbrella legislation for health professionals.

We can't afford to lose these professionals.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will have questions for the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.