

MEMBER'S STATEMENT – GREAT SLAVE – May 27, 2009

**GNWT RESPONSE TO**  
**SUPPLEMENTARY HEALTH BENEFITS MOTION**

Mr. Speaker, during the February-March 2009 session of this Legislative Assembly, I put forward a motion asking Cabinet to defer the implementation of the changes they are proposing to the supplemental health benefits currently being offered by this government. The motion passed with all 11 Regular Members supporting the motion and Cabinet abstaining.

After the motion passed, the Minister of Health and Social Services indicated that the government would not be moving forward with their implementation. Rather, in Committee of the Whole on February 10, 2009, according to the unedited Hansard of the day, the Minister of Health and Social Services said:

“...with respect to the review of the changes on the supplemental health, I just want to state again that I will be coming forward to the Standing Committee on Social Programs, with a timeline and outline and some of the framework review. I expect that we will do that when this session is over if that is okay. Officials are working on that so that we can have a document starting point and to get the input from the standing committee and then after that we can move forward with public consultation and more back and forth information exchange.”

I think the past two months have shown that not only we hear the public but then there is information the public will benefit from having as well. I look forward to that situation and that work.

When I heard the Minister say this and indicate that the officials were working on that, I had hoped that we would be hearing back from the Minister shortly after the last session. Unfortunately, it has been almost four months, exactly 106 days, and there had been no official response to our presentation made to the Standing Committee on Social Programs.

To me this is unacceptable. Given the importance of this and the fact that April 1, 2010 is rapidly approaching, further delay limits the ability of Regular Members and the public to provide real input into the process and the final result. It also further limits the ability of the department to implement the approved program in a reasonable and responsible manner. Implementation in a reasonable manner will take months of upfront work. People of the North still have questions on the direction the government will take with respect to supplemental health. There is still uncertainty. As a government, we need to ensure that the people who may be affected are aware of what is going on. Will there be any changes? Will things stay the same as they currently are? Who will be involved in the review of what is going to be done?

Regardless of the direction this government is taking, the people of the NWT deserve to know what that direction will be. The Minister must live up to her commitment to provide a framework. The Minister must remove the uncertainty that the people are currently experiencing.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will be asking the Minister of Health and Social Services questions on this topic.

Thank you.