

13-20(1)

The Honourable Lesa Semmler
Minister of Health and Social Services

Physician Staffing

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Range Lake on February 10, 2025, regarding Physician Staffing.

The Member asked how many full-time physicians were hired by the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority last fiscal year. I can report that the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority hired three permanent physicians in the 2023-2024 fiscal year and one to date in 2024-2025 fiscal year.

The Member also asked how many full-time physicians left their employment with the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority last fiscal year. I can report that five permanent physicians left their employment and/or did not renew their contract in the 2023-2024 fiscal year, and to date in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, four physicians have not renewed their contracts.

The Member requested a breakdown of the reasons why full-time physicians left their employment with the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority last fiscal year, including resignation, term expiration, retirement, termination and for any other relevant reason.

Because the numbers are small, sharing details could risk identifying individuals. I can confirm that some physicians have chosen not to renew their contracts due to both retirements and resignations. It is important to note that the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority continues to conduct exit interviews with departing employees and reviews all feedback they provide.

The Member requested a breakdown of the full-time physicians who left their employment with Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority last fiscal year by practice and specialty and a breakdown of locum versus resident full-time physicians who left their employment with Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority last fiscal year.

The breakdown of those who left their employment, or did not renew their contract in the 2023-2024 fiscal year are

- One Family Physician;
- One Obstetrician;
- One Pediatrician;
- One Internist; and,
- One Otolaryngologist.

A locum physician is a doctor who temporarily fills in for another doctor or a vacancy. In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority hired 926 locum physicians through 1,865 contracts. These numbers indicate that we have many returning locum physicians helping us maintain consistent care across the Northwest Territories. For example, in the 2023-2024 fiscal year 56% of contracted locum Family Physicians were returning locums and 36% of contracted locum Specialists were returning locums.

Once a locum physician completes a contract, they are not considered to have resigned or left their role. They simply finish their agreed-upon term. Locums are always eligible to accept additional or future contracts.

We actively encourage new locums to consider opportunities in the North, which has been a successful recruitment strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.