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June 5, 2003

Department of Obstetrics  
Stanton Territorial Hospital

Mr. M. Miltenberger  
Minister of Health  
GNWT



Dear Mr. Miltenberger,

The Obstetrics Department has grave concerns about the immediate and future effects of the specialists' resignation.

In the short term we are absolutely clear that we cannot carry on as usual with or without intermittent locum obstetrician back-up. Although in theory we could carry on "low risk" obstetrics under those circumstances, in fact risk stratification is fraught with difficulties and when impending disaster is diagnosed in Yellowknife we are hours away by air from additional resources, particularly pediatrics. In addition, two of the family practice obstetrics group members have resigned from their obstetrics practices as of July. With holidays, this leaves three family practitioners doing intrapartum obstetrics without pediatrician availability for at least several weeks in July. This is not doable. Thus we must not be accepting obstetrics patients from out of town for confinement and we must be making arrangements now to send our local patients to another center to await delivery. We cannot wait until the end of June to begin this process.

Although the above is very serious, the long term effect of the specialists' resignation is even more grave. What we have now is a well functioning team of specialists, family practitioners, nurses and other health care professionals with an excellent collegial atmosphere built up over decades. If a major part of this group departs we can see two consequences. Firstly, those of us who remain will also be looking to move on, as we will not be able to carry on our current model of practice. Secondly, it will take many years and exceptional people committed to the north to recreate this team. Do we have the time? Where will those people be found?

We will be contacting the communities immediately advising them that we will not be accepting prenatal patients for confinement and making arrangements with our local patients for their ongoing care outside of the Territory.

Sincerely,

*A Hansen*  
*A Woodside*

*J Morse*  
*D Butcher*  
*Al Woods*

The Department of Obstetrics  
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