

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 103-18(2): ELIGIBILITY FOR RENTAL ASSISTANCE

March 2, 2016

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. The story of the rental assistance client being forced to make her children homeless because four people in the two-bedroom trailer is considered overcrowding. My first question is: What is overcrowding? Can the Minister inform us universal uniform standard numbers are used to define overcrowding as it relates to eligibility parental assistance? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In terms of speaking to individual cases due to privacy laws that protect personal information, we cannot speak to personal individual circumstances or caseloads that are within our department. However, in terms of overcrowding, I don't have the exact number that the department does go by. I can inform the Member, though, that the department does currently get its guidance from sources like the National Occupancy Standards and the Residential Tenancies Act in assessing the appropriateness of housing of clients.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for his answer. I'm looking for two things now. I'm looking for a commitment for the Minister to provide that information about what the standard is for overcrowding that the department uses, and my second question is: Who enforces these standards?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: When a client comes to the office, our Client Service Officers (CSO), I believe, do a great job. Within the last government, a lot of changes and improvements and developments have been made, compliance and audit of the files have been developed, our regional managers actually do a monthly compliance of the workloads that their CSO's do. We have increased the staff training, as well as development. We also got to understand that in some cases, with some of our clients, they also need to live up to what is in the lease agreements with their renters as well when going through this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister. My questions the Minister is: Can he make a commitment to inform this side of the House what overcrowding is in terms of rental assistance and who enforces these standards.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned earlier, we do take guidance from the National Occupancy Standards, as well as the Residential Tenancies Act. That was reviewed in the last government. But we don't have a specific policy related to overcrowding. Obviously, we do want to provide the best possible outcomes for families and those that are in need of being housed, but it is a shared responsibility of individuals as well as the social departments within the governments. If that's something that we do need to set as a policy or standard, like I mentioned, we'll have to look at what the National Occupancy Standards do have and maybe also bring it before committee to see any recommendations that they might provide as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister. What I heard the Minister say here is that there are no specific standards for overcrowding as it relates to rental assistance, and so then I'm wondering on what basis any standards are enforced in terms of how many people live in one dwelling. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: As mentioned, when clients do go on income assistance or need that top up for market rental rates, the clients also have to adhere and still need to live up to the elements of what's in the lease agreement. When they get income assistance, they have to also abide by what they signed in the forms. Our Client Service Officers are just following policy, following legislation, and the landlords are also following what's in the lease agreements. When we fill out forms, we've got to make sure that we do it in the best way that's going to keep the family in the home.