

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 138-18(3)/ QUESTION 144-18(3): RENTAL OFFICE WAIT TIMES

February 20, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice. The 2016-2017 NWT Rental Office Report shows an enormous increase in wait times from the norms of the previous five years. Why has the turnaround time between the dates of application filing and the dates of hearing become so long? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Justice.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the period of 2016-2017, there were actually fewer applications, but there were more complex issues involved in those applications. Also, too, the long-standing rental officer retired, so that left one rental officer working there. Those two issues led to delays, which we fully acknowledge. Now, I have noticed that the numbers for the period from April 1, 2017, to January 31, 2018, do represent an improvement. So we are committed to improving those numbers further, Mr. Speaker. We knew there were also pressures on the office administrator's workload, and those procedures have been streamlined. So we think that all these adjustments will lead to improved service, which, of course, is our aim. Thank you.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate the response from the Minister. Can the Minister tell us whether he has allocated additional resources to this office?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, I can advise that we have allocated additional resources to the office. We have entered into a contract to have a second officer, a second rental officer, work there on a part-time basis. So we believe that that will reduce the workload.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate the Minister's response that there is, in fact, more staff available. He said that service time had been improved. So, for example, what percentage of applications are now taking more than 90 days to process?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I don't actually have those figures, but I will undertake to provide them to the Member opposite.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that commitment from the Minister. I'm looking for another commitment, and that is that the Minister will direct the rental office in its annual reports to track this indicator, which is not only the waiting time for applications, but the lag between applications and court orders in future reports. Thank you.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: The annual report covers the number of applications filed, the number of hearings held, and the elapsed time between filing and hearing. This information has been included as a performance measure in our departmental business plan for a number of years, and we'll continue to do that. We do recognize that justice delayed is justice denied. We do realize this is an important issue. We are taking

measures to improve service to the public. Thank you.

**QUESTION 144-18(3):
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MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to launching my kayak at the Michael Nadli Deh Cho Park. Not in 2018, but in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, on a more serious note, I have a follow-up question for the Minister of Justice. He talked about the importance of "justice delayed is justice denied." One way of measuring that in the rental office context is to find out how long it's taking between the hearing and the issuing of the court order. That's a metric that would be useful to have reported on an annual basis. Can the Minister commit to asking the rental office to do that? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Justice.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can commit to asking the rental officer to do that.