

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC GUARDIAN STAFFING CONCERNS

February 26, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about capacity issues in the Office of the Public Guardian, specifically about the size of the caseload the guardian herself is expected to manage.

The Public Guardian takes care of people who can't take care of themselves. Young adults who have been diagnosed with FAS, people with severe mental illness or intellectual disabilities, and older adults with dementia are all potential candidates for public or private guardianship depending on their circumstances. These, of course, are some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

When I last spoke about capacity issues, the Public Guardian's Office was swamped with applications for assessments for guardianship. It is my understanding that waiting times for assessments have decreased because the office has a larger pool of assessors to draw on. That is a positive change.

Mr. Speaker, what hasn't changed is the capacity of the Office of the Public Guardian to deliver services to her clients who have guardianship orders in place. An external review shows the Office from Public Guardian's caseload continues to grow, but her budget doesn't. It also identified operational concerns such as the relevance of the operations manual and the lack of recommended audits.

There are 76 clients under public guardianship who live throughout the North and Western Canada. In order to monitor and help make important decisions about their health and well-being, the Guardian needs to develop a relationship with each person by visiting them at least once a year. It is my understanding this isn't happening because there just isn't time for her to undertake these visits, provide oversight of 77 private guardianship orders, and manage the application process.

Mr. Speaker, this is a crucial and one-of-a-kind service. The Public Guardian's caseload is obviously too much for one social worker. The office requires at least one more staff in order to provide the engagement and oversight these vulnerable clients need. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Mahsi.