

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE
QUESTION 15-18(2): YELLOWKNIFE RCMP STAFF HOUSING

February 19, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: I understand that the RCMP has recently stopped providing housing for its staff posted to Yellowknife. I also understand that when the Police Services Agreement was renewed for 20 years, a new contract management committee was created for consultation on just these kinds of issues. Can the Minister of Justice confirm if the RCMP is pulled out of staff housing in Yellowknife and whether the GNWT was consulted in any way before it occurred?

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. The Minister of Justice, Mr. Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: The RCMP has been examining its policies in relation to providing housing, not only in the Northwest Territories, but across the whole of the country. Currently, housing is provided by Public Works, Government Services Canada to RCMP members, and, as I say, they are reviewing that policy.

Public Works has made it clear that they will no longer be providing housing in Inuvik, Fort Smith, Fort Simpson, Norman Wells, Hay River and Yellowknife. "G" Division is working with the NWT Housing Corporation for the provision of housing in most of those locations, but not in Yellowknife where housing will no longer be provided to members. It is thought that Yellowknife has a viable housing market where appropriate housing is available for sale and rent. This is, of course, an internal management function of the RCMP, so they do speak to us, but really, in the end it's their decision. They've made this decision and they don't think that it will affect recruitment.

MR. O'REILLY: I'm very concerned about the ability of the RCMP to attract and retain staff to Yellowknife. And now we've heard that this is going to potentially impact a number of other communities. Can the Minister of Justice tell this House whether there will be any monitoring and evaluation of the impacts on recruitment and retention of RCMP in this transition to private housing? And will that monitoring be carried out by GNWT or the RCMP itself?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: "G" Division continues, as I mentioned, to receive a large number of applications, and they don't expect that this change of housing policy will affect that. As I say, it is mainly an internal duty of the RCMP to look into this, and they are doing so. They will be consulting with us, but ultimately it's their decision.

MR. O'REILLY: I appreciate the answer from the Minister, but although it may be an internal management issue for the RCMP, I think this has potential impacts on our communities in terms of the ability of the RCMP to provide appropriate policing. So once again, can the Minister tell this House whether the GNWT then, if the RCMP won't do it, is going to monitor the impacts of this change in policy in terms of retention and recruitment?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we will of course be monitoring with the RCMP if there are any changes and if there are problems, and I assume that if there are issues of retention, they will speak with us and there may be further changes in policy. They are not expecting this change of policy to have any effect on the recruitment, as they already currently receive far more applications than there are positions, so they're not expecting a change in that. If there is a change in that area, I would expect they would consult with us.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. Final, short supplementary, Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: I'd like to seek a commitment, then, from the Minister that he would report back to the House perhaps within six months about retention and recruitment rates for the RCMP in the communities where this transition in housing policy is going to take place.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I think I can make that commitment. I will be in touch with the RCMP, and certainly if there are any changes in the issues of recruitment, we will be discussing those with them, and perhaps there will be tweaking of this policy. But they are fairly certain that this will not affect retention or recruitment.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. Colleagues, I would like to take this time to direct your attention to the visitors in the gallery. Mr. Eugene Hodgson, the son of the late Mr. Stuart Hodgson, and the first resident Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, and Evan, Eugene's son who travelled from Vancouver, B.C. to be here with us this afternoon for the memorial for Stuart Hodgson. Welcome to the gallery. Mahsi.