



RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION

Asked by: Mr. John Main, MLA Arviat North-Whale Cove

Asked of: Hon. Jeannie Ehaloak, Minister of Justice

Number: 67-5(2)

Date: April 30, 2020

Subject: Court Interpreter Staffing

Question 1: For the fiscal year 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19, what statistics regarding court interpreters did the Department of Justice track?

Question 1a: Please provide the statistics in the answer to Q1, in table form.

Response:

Court services do not track statistics regarding court interpreters. However, we can provide the following information regarding our positions:

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
# of indeterminate positions	2	2	2
# of indeterminate positions filled	2	1	1
# of contractors based on region/dialect available	9 Baffin dialect, 3 Kitikmeot, 3 Kivalliq for a total of 15 contracted interpreters	8 Baffin dialect, 3 Kitikmeot and 2 Kivalliq for a total 13 contracted interpreters	9 Baffin dialect, 2 Kitikmeot and 6 Kivalliq for a total 17 contracted interpreters

Question 2: For the fiscal years mentioned above, what employment terms were utilized for the court interpreter positions within the department?

The employment terms for the court interpreter/translator position have been consistent throughout each of the fiscal years noted. Court services has two indeterminate positions for court interpreter/translator. If an indeterminate court interpreter was unavailable due to illness or leave, a contractor court interpreter was hired.

In addition to this, if additional court interpreters were needed for court circuits, or an Iqaluit sittings, a contractor court interpreter was hired. For the fiscal year of 2016-17, courts services had two full-time indeterminate positions that were filled for the whole fiscal year. For the fiscal year of 2017-18, there was one full-time indeterminate position that was filled for the whole fiscal year while the other one position was filled until the court interpreter resigned in August 2019 for employment with another government agency. For the fiscal year of 2018-19, court services had one full-time indeterminate position that was filled until the court interpreter resigned in February 2019 for other employment within the Government of Nunavut. During the fiscal year of 2018-19, in addition to the indeterminate employee, court services was required to hire contract court interpreters for all court sittings.

Question 3: For the fiscal years mentioned above, what was the rate of compensation utilized for the court interpreter positions within the department?

Indeterminate positions for court interpreter/translator are salaried employees, evaluated at a pay range 15. Any person hired as a contract court interpreter was given a per sitting rate based on their qualifications or certification status. A certified court interpreter was given a rate of \$600.00 per sitting while a non-certified court interpreter was given a rate of \$450.00 per sitting.

Question 4: How many years of experience, and what specific certifications, are required to work as a court interpreter for the department?

For indeterminate court interpreter/translator positions the ideal candidate would have post-secondary interpreter/translator program, grade 12 education and three years of experience in providing simultaneous and consecutive interpreting or one year experience in court or legal setting as an interpreter/translator. A certified court interpreter would have completed the interpreter/translator 3-year program through Nunavut Arctic College (or the same program which was offered in Northwest Territories prior). A non-certified interpreter may be used, if their Inuktitut language skills are excellent but do not have a legal background, supported by a certified interpreter as a mentor, with permission from the Senior Chief Justice. Once the non-certified interpreter has been interpreting for the courts for some time, the Chief Justice may certify such an interpreter as a certified court interpreter for the courts.

Question 5: What are the impacts of court interpreter staffing shortages on the proceedings of the Nunavut Court of Justice?

Interpretation is imperative to ensure both constitutional and legal compliance, but also to ensure access to justice for Nunavummiut. If an interpreter is not booked for any sitting, this may cause a delay in the process due to the necessary interpretation required for both the courts and the public.

Question 5a: In which communities or regions is court interpreter staffing the most challenging?

Due to the low numbers of contract court interpreters in the Kitikmeot and Kivalliq, coverage has been the most challenging in those regions. Specifically, court services are competing with other organizations to secure reliable interpreters. Despite the challenges faced due to the high demand for interpreters across the territory, court services have been consistent in providing clients and the courts translation services.

Question 6: What has the department done, in chronological order, to address the shortage of court interpreter candidates?

Each year, court services has actively sought to have students from the Nunavut Arctic College interpreter/translator program complete their practicums at the Nunavut Justice Centre. By completing their practicums at the Nunavut Justice Centre, they get the feel of working for court services and build a better understanding of the legal system.

It is the hope that in providing students with this experience, they are encouraged to pursue a career with the Department of Justice in Court Services.

Court services has been actively trying to recruit interpreters that have completed the interpreter/translator program. Attempts have been made to fill the positions by regularly posting them as restricted competitions. These positions have been posted three times in the last three years with limited success. As court services has been unable to successfully fill the indeterminate court interpreter/translator positions, there has been a requirement to rely on the contract interpreters available.

The interpreter/translator position was last posted in April of 2020 with a closing date of May 8, 2020. The results of the competition are currently unknown.