

It's now Judge Robinson

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In accepting his new job, Sid Robinson realizes there's a few things he won't need any more. One of those is credit at the bank.

"I just got my overdraft extended," chuckles Robinson. Now, however, "my wife fears I'll buy more dogs."

He doesn't plan on buying them — he already has 20-plus — but he should be able to afford them. On Wednesday, the long-time northern legal aid lawyer was appointed as a provincial court judge.

"It's going to be fun," Robinson predicted. "Instead of saying, 'I think the judge should have done that,' now I'll have a bit more of a direct impact."

First called to the bar in 1978,

"I've been around long enough to know... the provincial court doesn't have a magic wand that you can wave and fix everything."

— *newly-appointed judge*
Sid Robinson

Robinson began his career as a staff lawyer with the Meadow Lake Legal Services Society. He moved to La Ronge in 1979, and except for one year at Battlefords legal aid and some time away to take a diesel mechanics course, he's been here ever since.

Over his 22 years in the North, Robinson has seen plenty

of it. Both he and his wife Hilary Johnstone are avid skiers, and their son is named after Ragnar Jonsson, an indomitable Scandinavian who trapped in northern Saskatchewan for 60 years (using skis for transportation). Robinson's recreational pursuits also attest to his enthusiasm for the North: a summer spent canoeing the Churchill River with lawyer Greg Marchildon, and a year off in 1993 to buy sled dogs.

However, most of what Robinson has seen of the North has been through the eyes of a lawyer. As he sorted through files to give to other lawyers, he expressed a few regrets.

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Robinson looks forward to new role

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"The part I'm going to miss most is talking to clients," he said; those conversations tend to be more fascinating than "the black letter of the law."

As a judge, he's also going to have to watch his mouth more. "I have to learn to be less opinionated, and that is a serious concern for me," he said. "I have to learn to listen better and talk less. ... Judges have to be impartial, they can't come with a bunch of pre-formed opinions."

To avoid conflict of interest, most of his work as a judge will be on the northern circuit, whereas his recent legal work has been in La Ronge.

He will soon head to a one-week training course for "baby judges" in Quebec, and he admits he's a bit nervous about trying out life on the other side of the bench.

"If you're a legal aid lawyer, you're running in your own track," he said.

However, he's eager to try his hand at the job. "I've been around long enough to know... the provincial court doesn't have a magic wand that you can wave and fix everything," he said. "But I'm looking forward to making some small change."

Carmen Pauls

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