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Licence to perform marriages sought for Scientology minister

The Church of Scientology says the time has come for the Government of Ontario to let its clergymen perform marriages.

In the past, the church's applications to have its ministers licenced as marriage officers have been turned down by the office of the registrar-general on the grounds that the religion was not in existence for 25 years — one of the signs required by the province that new groups are permanent and serious.

In a 262-page submission to the registrar-general, Ernest Pike, the Scientologists have proposed that Rev. Raymond Rockl, the newly appointed resident minister in the Toronto headquarters, be given a licence to conduct marriages. A certificate of Mr. Rockl's ordination in January, 1973, is included.

In a telephone interview,

Mr. Pike said he had received the request and when he had read it he would pass it on to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Mr. Pike refused to speculate on the outcome. "I haven't the foggiest. It's a lot of literature and I don't know how busy the minister is."

In a press release the church said it expected the Government to "dream up some new excuse" for refusing the application.

There are about 100 ordained Scientologists in Ontario, 15 of whom are active in Toronto.

A press officer, Earl Smith, said yesterday that Mr. Rockl's application could be regarded as a test case but eventually the church will be asking for more. They will be performing the marriages of Scientologists mostly, Mr. Rockl said, but if somebody else wanted a Scientology

wedding ceremony, he could see no reason why the request would not be granted.

Scientology clergymen are ordained from the ranks of counsellors after a course lasting two to three months, said Carol Young, a leading Scientologist in Toronto. Counsellors would already have taken a course lasting a year or two, she said.

Ministers wear a clerical collar when they are counselling and are paid a salary. Mrs. Young said she did not know what their salary was except that it varied, depending on the amount of time they spent working for the church.

A letter from Professor John Meagher, director of the Institute of Christian Thought at the University of St. Michael's College, accompanies and supports the Scientologist's application.