

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
QUESTION 91-18(2): JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

March 1, 2016

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Yesterday, the Minister give us an update on the Junior Kindergarten Program, and the update seems to turn on a lot more of the kind of consultation that was done for the report itself. My first question is: What more is there to learn about Junior Kindergarten in order to implement it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's many areas that we need to still go out and consult on. As Members are aware, the 17th Legislative Assembly, the government at the time, did put a pause on the program to ensure the rollout was adequate and that we did get engagement and consultation from all the Members. A comprehensive report was done. We took the eight recommendations out of the comprehensive report with the main one focusing on engaging our stakeholders which are daycares, Aboriginal Head Start, parents, elders, community leaders, and not only that, but also finding out what is in the communities that can help them implement junior kindergarten a little bit better in terms of resources, the strengths that they have, and the makeup of the community. In those engagements, we will also go to the regional centers, which Junior Kindergarten wasn't part of, as well as here in Hay River. Part of that other stakeholder group is if the daycare centres and home daycares are getting as much information as we can so that when we do look at junior kindergarten, we can provide that program to the best of its ability meeting the needs of the child and the needs of the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thanks to the Minister for that answer, but my question remains between the information that's available in the junior kindergarten report and the feasibility study on universal daycare, what information does the department not already have to proceed with implementation?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I did mention a few of the areas that we're looking in. Other areas, we're going to be looking at making the communication strategy on getting Junior Kindergarten communities a funding model, which was a big issue in the last government when Junior Kindergarten was first pushed out put. We're looking at training our Early Childhood Development Officers plus the wage subsidy, and we want to get out there and do it right this time around and make sure that all communities do have input into the Junior Kindergarten Program and rolled out. It was a recommendation from the technical report that was brought forward. The feasibility study also gave us some really good reviews and said that we do need to continue with junior kindergarten, and we did get a lot of good feedback in that technical report.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for his answer. Could the Minister please tell us what the timing is for implementing Junior Kindergarten?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: As mentioned, over the next few months we're going to get out to the communities, engage them. We are new into this government and there are a lot of priorities

within this department. We're looking at graduation rates, we're looking at post-secondary, early childhood is one of them as well. We're going to try to get out there and try to get our staff into the communities, get that information. Once we have that information in the communities that want to provide junior kindergarten, then we'll look at and implementation date.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Minister. My last question is whether the money is secure to continue the implementation of junior kindergarten in the next fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: In the last government in this last fiscal year we did have some communities that had the option of moving forward in junior kindergarten. We are in the process of going through our budgets for 2016/2017 coming up after we go through the interim appropriations here, and at that time we'll look at where we can get the dollars to continue to implement Junior Kindergarten. But there is a process, and right now we're going to have to wait until we go through that 2016/2017 budget to see where we can continue to provide all early childhood programs.