

Committee of the Whole
Review of Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Education Act
May 31, 2017

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to be here today to introduce Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Education Act.

This bill seeks to change the age of entitlement to access kindergarten programs from five years old to four, as well as reduce the minimum hours of instruction required for grades one through 12 to 945 hours.

The goal of these two major initiatives, also known as junior kindergarten and STIP, is to improve the NWT education system for all learners so that they can meet the challenges of today and into the future, and be successful in whatever they choose to do.

Junior kindergarten will provide all NWT families, regardless of their income or geographic location, the option of enrolling their four-year-old children in a free, play-based, developmentally appropriate program.

As this Legislative Assembly has recognized, early childhood development is critical to a child's future success, and there is a direct link between the quality of early education and care and positive future outcomes.

We also recognize that we need to provide teachers with time to plan and develop their own learning. This government knows that in order to improve our students' academic results, we not only need JK offered in every community, we also need our teachers to have time, during their regular work week and school year, to develop their skills and properly plan, implement, and assess their students' learning.

In order to improve student outcomes, we must ensure educators have access to the experiences, resources, training, and professional development to improve their workload and wellness situations, so they can focus on excellence in teaching. This is what the Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices initiative is all about.

Before the end of this school year, I will provide the Standing Committee on Social Development with a complete monitoring, evaluation, and accountability framework for the STIP pilot project, where we anticipate seeing improvements in:

- Teacher satisfaction through pre- and post-school year surveys;
- Teacher human resource statistics, such as sick days;
- Use of professional development time;
- Student attendance; and
- Student course completions.

Significant change will take time, and the evaluation will likely evolve as schools try new approaches with their school calendars. As such, the evaluation plan will include a

reporting schedule outlining the appropriate measures, as the initiative evolves over time.

I want to reiterate that I believe the territory-wide implementation of junior kindergarten and the opportunity to build in time during the school year for teachers to complete their professional duties and strengthen the quality of instructional practices will be game changers.

I strongly believe that, in years to come, we will look back at this moment in time to these two strategic initiatives and see them as a vital step on the road to success for our young children, our youth, and our territory.

I will be happy to answer any questions Members may have. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister Moses. I will note that the committee, the Standing Committee on Social Development presented a substantive report, Committee Report 10-18(2), in relation to this bill. Now, Minister, do you have witnesses you would like to bring to the Chamber?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister, Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Minister, would you please introduce your witnesses to the House.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: To my right, I have my Assistant Deputy Minister of Education and Culture, Ms. Rita Mueller, and Mr. Michael Reddy with our Legislative Division. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Welcome to the witnesses. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 16, and Committee, please keep in mind that we will also be discussing the report prepared by the standing committee as well, so please keep any general comments to the scope of the bill. Do we have general comments? Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My general comments are going to be short and brief. We went out and went to three communities. We have heard over 237 responses through e-mails and letters. Committee provided and listened to what people and teachers and administrators said. We then provided – we are making two recommendations here to the floor to make a decision to amend the bill, and at that time, we will discuss those. I will have further comments during those amendments. I would like to thank everybody for their commitment and hard work to this. It was very interesting and very challenging. We would like to thank all the presenters, and all the work that they did to provide us. Their feedback, the union, the teachers, and all the parents and all that. It was a very difficult decision. I understand this is near and dear to people's hearts, our youth. It is near and dear to me. Bill 16, as we move forward, we do have amendments that we wish to bring to the floor at the appropriate time. Thank you,

Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. General comments to the bill? Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Social Development. They spent a tremendous amount of time making sure this legislation and the public interest, and it was well-represented through their deliberations, and ultimately, through the substantive report that they created and read into the House earlier this week. This Act will bring both junior kindergarten into the NWT curriculum, and reduce the number of instructional hours required by law. Those are the most significant portions of it.

It has been a hot topic of debate in our 33 communities. Many different viewpoints rising to the forefront. Ultimately, junior kindergarten has largely been well understood by the public. The strengthening instructional teacher practices, the STIP pilot, is somewhat of a new development for many people although we have been discussing it for several months. To be clear, I think our teachers are world class, and they work in very difficult circumstances here in the North. Given the limited resources that we have at our means, providing them with the flexibility to do their jobs to the best of their ability, I think is a very good policy decision.

I do acknowledge the concerns that the Standing Committee on Social Development has brought forward, and I appreciate what they have set out in their report and the recommendations they have made, and I look forward to debating their proposed amendments later on today. I would like to keep an open mind on legislation. I certainly do support the intentions of this bill, but if there are ways to make it better, I am open to considering those. But I do want to say, I strongly support the hardworking teachers of Kam Lake and all of our communities, and I am very pleased to see that we are working on solutions to the challenges they face every day as they are educating our students and supporting our families. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Next, we have Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, when we had our hearing in Yellowknife, the executive director of the NWTTA said that the status quo in education was not the answer to where we are in terms of student achievement and teacher wellness. I agree with that. I agree with that statement. We need to improve student outcomes in every grade, not only in graduation. The process of getting to the point we are at now, reporting on this bill has been made unnecessarily difficult by poor communication by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

In the case of JK, the standing committee and our colleagues on this side have worked very hard to ensure that full funding for junior kindergarten is, in fact, full funding. That was not given proactively. It was something that had to be wrangled about, and I think that we do have some good results. But this is a perfect example of what my grandmother would have said was “penny wise and pound foolish.” This could have been a good news story right from the beginning if adequate resources had been pledged willingly and proactively instead of being extracted an inch at a time.

Likewise, with the student instructional -- strengthening teacher instructional practice, this also could have been a good news story but it was not because once again, the major problem with this is that there are not enough teachers in our school system, and the teachers who are there now are too hard-pressed to do anymore, a point which I heard repeatedly, and which I do not doubt at all. But rather than providing a proactive approach from a communications point of view, the Minister left it to the standing committee to explain this initiative to incredulous parents and to supportive teachers. As a result, once again, we have ended up wrangling right up until today about amendments and about support for the bill itself. If there is a takeaway from this entire process, it is that communication between the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, and its stakeholders, and that includes parents, students, teachers, regular MLAs, needs to be improved. We are not your last thought. We need to be your first thought, and that is not what I am seeing here, and the process has been made unduly difficult as a result. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Ms. Green. Would the Minister like to respond?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think communication is an issue that we need to work on, but it also needs to be addressed through partnerships with our education authorities working with our Board chairs to ensure that this message gets out to teachers. I did attend some of the public hearings as well as constituency meetings where we had parents who were just getting this information presented to them. However, I know some of our education authorities did reach out as well, including us, and we did try to get the communication on the radio and in the newspapers, get it out as much as we can to get feedback from parents and other stakeholders, but I do appreciate the Member's comments, from all three Members who have made comments so far. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Moses. Next, we have Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First off, I want to thank the Standing Committee on Social Development for their exceptional work on Bill 16. I had the privilege of sitting in on many of their meetings. I also want to thank all of the people who participated in that review.

My remarks, I am going to focus on a little bit on STIP, and then I will have some remarks about junior kindergarten towards the end, as well. On the surface, this bill looks like it is small changes, but it has proven to be very challenging to get clear responses and information from the Minister and his department. This uncertainty has often given the appearance of setting teachers' interests against those of parents and created tremendous confusion. I have probably received more e-mails and calls on this bill compared to any of other matter during my term as an MLA.

A few key points I want to make about STIP: a huge amount of collaboration work went into the Education Renewal initiative as the way to transform our educational system to better meet the changing needs of our students while recognizing the critical role of teachers and their wellness, but changes in instructional hours was not a recommendation coming out of the Education Renewal initiative. I fully recognize the

key role played by teachers as we raised two children here, in Yellowknife, and very much value the commitment of teachers here and across the Northwest Territories. Changes in instructional hours came out of the collective bargaining process as a means to relieve the pressure felt by overworked teachers and to ensure that they are treated fairly compared to other jurisdictions in Canada.

While I believe in and support collective bargaining, Regular MLAs had no idea as to what mandate was provided to GNWT negotiators assigned to the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association contract. This negotiating mandate was clearly driven by Cabinet's fiscal strategy and their desire to set a pattern for future negotiations with the Union Of Northern Workers. The NWTTA president went on the public record saying that there was no offer in terms of salary increases, so something else had to be done to get an agreement that teachers would accept. Once again, Cabinet's fiscal strategy was the driving force behind those negotiations, a strategy that has been rejected numerous times by Regular MLAs.

So what are the lessons we can learn from this? Number one, Regular MLAs have to pay much closer attention to what Cabinet is negotiating. I am not asking to be at the negotiating table, but Cabinet needs to share its approach and seek input from the Regular MLAs. That has yet to happen. I have asked for a briefing on the UNW negotiations. The finance Minister made a commitment to do that during our winter review of the 2017-18 budget, but it still has not taken place.

Number two, as a government, we need to invest more, a lot more, into education to improve student outcomes and teacher wellness by hiring more teachers and other measures. Children should be amongst our highest priorities and, yes, even higher than building roads to resources.

Three, ECE needs to get back to the Education Renewal initiative as the real path to educational changes. The train wrecks of junior kindergarten implementation and STIP resulted from very poor and often contradictory communications from ECE and a lack of leadership. Junior kindergarten and STIP have diverted an enormous amount capacity away from the changes that everyone had agreed to make in the Education Renewal initiative.

To be clear, I believe our teachers are overworked and should be treated fairly. One option is a reduction and instructional hours, but another solution could be to hire more teachers and classroom assistants and other changes. Unfortunately, the bill does not address other options and has not provided an opportunity to fully explore all these options.

I want to turn quickly to the junior kindergarten portion of the bill. Everyone would agree, in an ideal world, that junior kindergarten is inherently a good thing, but the implementation has been fraught with poor communications and shifting responses. Junior kindergarten implementation has consumed an inordinate amount of political time and capital. It is beyond me how a policy analysis could have gone forward without considering financial impacts on busing, inclusive schooling, Aboriginal programming and other costs, or the impact on childcare space providers. No matter what the Minister has said, it is clearly not fully funded when it comes to inclusive schooling, Aboriginal

programming, and busing.

Yesterday, we received the formula that ECE uses for funding schools, and we now have that information, finally, but it is not where it should be. I will continue to push the Minister very hard on these matters until there are clear and unequivocal commitments to fully fund these aspects of junior kindergarten implementation. I recognize that some of the words I have said are pretty harsh, but, I am sorry, I am going to call it the way it is. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Next, Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, like speakers previous, I want to commend the Standing Committee on Social Development for their extensive work on this bill and thank them for taking this legislation on the road to seek very important input from the public. I also want to acknowledge the many residents of Yellowknife North, in particular parents, that took the time to share their views and opinions with me over the past couple of months. I also want to thank the many teachers, many of them from Yellowknife North, who wrote to me sharing their work experience and perspective on Bill 16. I would be remiss if I didn't thank the Minister and his staff for attending my recent Yellowknife North constituency meeting, as well as representatives from the NWT Teachers' Association for coming and sharing valuable information so constituents could be better informed on this matter. Lastly, I want to thank Yellowknife school districts and their boards for their valuable insight, as well.

Mr. Chair, one of the most important jobs we have as a government is the education of our youth. Our education system is where we place our trust to raise healthy, well-adjusted, capable children, ready to take on the world and become integral contributors to society. It is a sacred duty we have to the children and families of the Northwest Territories and, indeed, our future.

As an advocate for education, I am also a staunch supporter of teachers, and therefore I am strongly in support of the Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices, or STIP, program. We have bestowed a great many responsibilities on our teachers over the years, and we have high expectations of them, and those responsibilities and expectations never cease. In fact, they continually grow.

While the STIP program does reduce the minimum required classroom hours, this does not mean teachers would get more time away from work. Instead, STIP refocuses teachers' hours and school resources to provide enhanced support for teachers and more dedicated time for non-instructional responsibilities.

Under the STIP program, they will have more time for planning, strengthening and improving their skills, and professional collaboration and development. They will be able to form and participate in professional learning communities to build on experience and shared knowledge. Emphasizing these things will result in a better quality of education for our kids. Teachers will be at less risk of high stress, unmanageable workloads, and burnout. As has been said many times in this discussion, teachers who carry an unreasonable workload and can't manage a healthy work-life balance won't be good resources for our kids in the long term.

We know teacher absenteeism and high turnover have been a major concern over the years. I believe we must remain committed to Education Renewal, in which we have clearly stated that the teacher-student relationship will be positive and healthy while maintaining a safe learning environment.

Mr. Chair, as a child, I was challenged with a learning disability, dyslexia. I believe that, as a youth facing this challenge, my time with teachers was better served through quality time and not necessarily a large quantity of time. I would emphasize in this context that Bill 16 permits a reduction in the minimum hours of classroom time, but teachers, administration, and boards will have the discretion to exceed that minimum to provide students with the support they deem necessary.

As has been articulated by many, we must support our teachers, and I believe that to be true if we want to see results. Teachers have the most profound influence on the educational success enjoyed by children. I want to state clearly that I am committed not only to the betterment of education but also to the ongoing development, skill, and proficiency of teachers. By supporting our teachers, we will ultimately be offering the most support and benefit to the ongoing success and wellbeing of our children. We should emphasize, as the Minister noted in his comments earlier, that the Minister has made a commitment to provide a monitoring, evaluation, and accountability plan to the Standing Committee on Social Development before the end of this school year.

The other important element of Bill 16 is the introduction of junior kindergarten. The government has committed to fully funding junior kindergarten, and this is a positive step forward. The Minister's commitment to maintain a pupil-to-teacher ratio of 12:1 or better is also significant. These achievements are to be commended. However, to be clear, Members have wrestled with the question of what "full funding" truly means.

The Department has acknowledged that its funding formulas determine the allocations, but not those allocations adequately. To implement junior kindergarten, funding for inclusive schooling will need to be stretched over an additional grade. The Standing Committee's report indicates that territorial board chairs have already flagged funding as inadequate and in continued decline. These chairs called for funding to be restored to 2012 levels.

We also need to make sure that the transportation requirements of JK are adequately funded. The Minister has made the commitment to monitor the transportation costs and seek additional funding if necessary. I think it's important that we commit full funding to all aspects of JK.

To that end, if necessary, I will be seeking to confirm adequate funding in the forthcoming 2017-2018 budget deliberations.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, the education of our young people is a crucial and sacred job. Central to our goal of creating a stable, healthy, and prosperous future for all our citizens, support for our teachers in whom we placed our trust for that mission is an essential part of achieving that goal.

Just lastly, Mr. Chair, before final support, I look forward to considering my colleague's amendments and those are my general comments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Next I have Mr. Nakimayak.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I won't take up too much time. I know there's a lot of questions and that I won't reiterate what my colleagues are saying. Just coming from my region of Nunakput, I know teachers are overworked and like other Members here have had tons of e-mails from teachers, from principals, and from education boards. I believe that students need a good comfortable place to go to school and a chance to learn. In my home town of Paulatuk, we've gone through a couple of principals and teacher burnout is an example of – also a sign of whether a child wants to go to school or not.

I know when I was younger, I looked forward to go to school every day. That was the quality of the teachers that we had and the dedication that they put into it. Back then, they weren't as overworked as they are now.

I'm just going to keep it short. I support the amendments to this Bill. I support the wishes of some teachers across the territory who want to make this difference. I believe that teacher burnout will eventually someday affect the attendance of some students. I'm just going to say that I support this. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nakimayak. Next, Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as part of the Standing Committee on Social Development that was tasked with doing the review and seeking a public process and consultations on the two key amendments that were being proposed, first, of course was JK and the other one was on the instruction of ours, I know the report has been done. I thank my colleagues in the House for bringing that report, and I understand we're going to keep talking; more likely the substance of the report later on, but for the most part, what was troubling for me was to hear parents, the quote right off the bat was just – I'm just looking at my notes fairly quickly. One parent made the comment that it was disheartening to learn of the – just perhaps some of the bungling, if I could use that term, in terms of communicating the agreement between the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association and the department in terms of instructional hours. That stood out in my mind in terms of some of the speakers. Of course, these are parents that have the best interests of their children in mind. At the same time, you know, the other comments to say that, well, the status quo is not workable but they need to make some changes. It was a balancing act to try to listen to all the concerns that we have to field throughout the communities that we had visited.

Coming from a small community, it's good that we have large regions and a city like Yellowknife, where you have an abundance of teachers and some very successful rates, successful achievement rates, that we can be all proud of, but, in smaller communities, it's very challenging. In some respects, we lag behind in terms of academic achievements in terms of how our students are doing in the smaller communities and then to consider the idea of reducing this task from instructional hours. That's hard to take.

Frame that in as perhaps the concern and hearing the other concerns that were made.

It was almost a balancing act that the committee had, but of course, the most prominent was having to try to work with and negotiate an agreement between, of course, the Department and the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association and bringing that forth to the parents and to the community and in one respect, the teachers' support obviously. The parents were very concerned in terms of how it is that they have to maybe fill in the time that, you know, the need to schedule in in terms of their daily lives and how the needs of their children's well-being is going to be met. It was very challenging, but for the most part what I heard was funding has to be a full commitment from this Department, especially for JK. At the same time, we need to seriously mark and flag the idea that we need more teachers and more resources for schools. That, for me, was what stood out very clear. We need to make it a priority as we close off the chapter on this and moving forward. I look forward to the other debates and discussions that might follow from my colleagues for that. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Next, I have Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a few remarks here. As my colleague said with the social committee, we were pretty much tasked with consulting with the communities here. It's a very difficult position we were put in. Many of the students weren't aware of everything that was being proposed. I think that's one important part to emphasize on because the parent should have known about this before it was even agreed to. I feel – I know we do have to do things a little differently. Many of our students are somewhere between two years behind grade level in some of our communities and it's a huge, huge concern of the parents especially up in the North. I know the Department has done their research and the research does say that in the long-term that this will benefit the students. I'm sure everyone will be keeping a close eye on this. It is a pilot project, a three-year pilot project, that we will be keeping a close eye on.

I know it's most likely a longer term that we'll see the outcomes of this, but those are some of the concerns brought forward.

Also, a number of concerns are students in high school, especially with reduced hours may not be ready to – once they graduate to move on to post secondary -- and I'm hoping the Department could assure us that that won't affect our grade 12 students moving forward.

Also, the department did make some changes to JK, junior kindergarten. In the last year, it was working well. It was optional to the communities to offer junior kindergarten. Some of us MLAs here have Headstart Programs that were successful for over 20 years in our communities. Now they're competing with junior kindergarten.

It is a very difficult position that they are being put in, themselves, having to scale back, whether it is staffing. Also, the funding that they receive is based on the attendance that they have, which has gone down because some students are attending junior kindergarten, whether it is in the morning or afternoon. That was also brought up. What we are told is junior kindergarten is now competing with Aboriginal Head Start, and for sure, junior kindergarten is going to win.

Those are all brought to our attention, and I know the schools have been trained to work

with the Aboriginal Head Start programs, whether it is junior kindergarten in the afternoons and Head Start in the morning, and that was working well. I am hoping in the future here that these programs could work jointly, but the bottom line is whatever decision we make today, we are going to get some backlash. The bottom line, I guess, is we do need to support our teachers. I am hoping in the long run that this reduction of up to 100 hours now - it has not been clear what every school has decided to do. I know some are around 45 hours. Some are at 60 or 80, but if schools are not going above 80, it should have been up to 80 hours. Maybe it could have been a little better sell.

Moving forward, I guess, I will be supporting our teachers on this one, and I know the Department has told us that every year this will be reviewed, so if things are not working out, I know we could go back to what it was before. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, would like to thank the committee for their efforts on this controversial challenging issue. Like my colleague from the Delta, coming from a small community, it can be challenging as it is in any profession, and I feel that teaching is a noble one. We had, in one of the communities back home, 100 percent turnover of the teachers. That is an indicator. A school is no good without any staff within.

We are faced with a number of other obstacles to attract high quality teachers in these smaller communities, and the indicators are there to say there is some trouble here. We have got minimal graduation rates, lower than national averages. Those are indicators that something is not working, which results into a joint effort and a joint challenge by the parent community and the teachers.

The teachers need time to prepare. Not only do they prepare for the classroom chores, but beyond and outside the regular hours, we have teachers in probably every community that set aside their own time to try and gather the youth into the area of sports. In the community of Good Hope, we have got an excellent team of young boys there that have won territorial level games here in Yellowknife. I witnessed that over the last couple of years here, and I am quite proud of those fellows there, but equally said, recognition should be given to the teacher also in having to work outside the classroom to encourage and provide activities there for the youth and keeping them off the streets.

For all those reasons, and in the classroom as well, we have a number of cases here that there are multiple class grades within the same room. Preparing our high school students to enter in post-secondary is another challenge there, because it is not the grade examination. It is the same examination as our neighbouring provinces, but we ask ourselves, well, why? I guess one of the reasons why is that the quality of delivery is really not there, because it is faced with numerous remote, isolated challenges, and not all stakeholders are on site and facing those challenges at the community level. Those are my short comments, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. All Members from that side of the House had a chance to comment. I see no further general comments. We will proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill, deferring the bill number and title until

after consideration of the clauses.

Please turn to page 1 of the bill. I will call out each clause. If you agree, please respond with an "agreed." Clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Just so I am clear on the process here, are we allowed to ask questions about the subject matter of these clauses? Is this the appropriate time? I see the clerk shaking their head. Okay.

This is the part of the bill that deals with junior kindergarten. Late yesterday, the Minister sent this document to the Standing Committee on Social Development, which I have got a copy of as well. It is the 2017-2018 school funding framework. In this, there are sort of different formulas for different aspects of school funding. There is administration, inclusive schooling, Aboriginal programming. There is a number of them in here. Some of these formulas start with kindergarten. Some of them have been changed to include junior kindergarten. Can the Minister provide some rationale as to why some formulas include junior kindergarten and why some were left at kindergarten? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We do our fund our schools at over \$155 million in the 2017-2018 school year. One in particular such is inclusive schooling, which is \$26.5 million. Some of these funding formulas we are actually funding over the above legislated values, and as he mentioned with the formula funding, he has recognized that some of them include junior kindergarten; however, some do include kindergarten. We are looking at reviewing some of these funding formulas, and appreciate that the Member has brought that to our attention. We would just let the Member know that we are looking at some of the reviews of the formula funding.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. In the last week and a half, I have met with the Yellowknife Catholic schools, the Yellowknife District No. 1 board and CSFTNO, all of the Yellowknife boards, and each one of them has raised this issue with me about how JK is not fully funded. We have got the evidence now. The Minister says that they are looking at changing some of these formulas. When is that going to happen, and will it happen in time for the 2017-2018 school year? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have committed to fully funding junior kindergarten, as we have said on many occasions. With the funding formulas, that is something that we constantly review. Like anything else, our policies, in terms of the concerns that were brought up in terms of fully funding junior kindergarten, we still don't

know the full numbers, so we are still working with our education authorities.

Once we have those education authorities, we will look at going through the appropriate supplementary budgetary process. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the response from the Minister. Can the Minister tell me: does the department have projections right now of the number of junior kindergarten students that they expect across the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have the details. I will go to my assistant deputy minister, please. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Ms. Mueller.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, we have an approximate number of students that we believe are going to be in junior kindergarten for the upcoming 2017-18 school year. As a result of that, for example, for transportation costs for junior kindergarten students, based on that estimated amount that was included in the transportation funding, that was given to education authorities.

What we are still trying to determine and work with education authorities on is the cost of the additional booster seats or seatbelts that would be put into school buses for those children who would require them. That is still something that we are working with education authorities on.

As far as for these other amounts of funding, as the Minister has already suggested, this upcoming school year, \$155 million will be distributed among the education authorities to support JK to grade 12 education. Out of that amount, \$26.5 million has been allocated for inclusive schooling. This current school year is the first year of a three-year phased-in approach for the new inclusive schooling directive.

With that, new funding and accountability methods are a model that is being used. Over the next few years, we will see if that is the appropriate amount for the support of inclusive schooling. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Mueller. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As we continue to work with education authorities and families continue to look at enrolling four-year-olds into the junior kindergarten program, we will have a better stance, after this initial setup, on enrollments. I can provide the Member with those numbers as we get them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That was a very long answer to a simple question, but I have one simple question to ask the Minister: I am looking for a commitment from him to prepare cost estimates, using these formulae, to change the

ones that start at kindergarten, change them to JK, and tell me, using their JK student projections, how much extra it is going to cost to fully fund JK. Will the Minister commit to providing regular NLAs with that information? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you. Members did receive the most up to date, most current funding formulae that we have for how we fund our schools. We can take a look at the ones that pertain to junior kindergarten, and then look at adjusting those. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not sure that actually responded to the question. I am wondering: can I get the commitment from the Minister of the department to plug in their projections of JK students and run them through these formulae, where the formulae start at kindergarten, add in JK, and provide those cost estimates for the additional funding that would be required to fully fund JK? Is the Minister committed to provide that information? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When we did commit to fully funding junior kindergarten, we did base those on projected four-year-olds from the previous year, and we already are committing to the 12:1 ratio of how we fund junior kindergarten. Those numbers were put in for when we said we were going to be fully funding JK, and that announcement was made during the budget address. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I recognize that the Minister is under no obligation to actually respond to the questions, but I don't know how to make it any clearer. The formulae that are in here that start with kindergarten: can the Minister change that to JK, plug in the projections that he has, and give us the cost estimates, what those calculations actually are? Can the Minister commit to do that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When we look at implementing the 12:1 ratio right now on junior kindergarten, that is increasing the amount of dollars that are already going to the schools at, I believe, about \$1.5 million. The formula funding we will have to take back to the department and look at whether it is going to impact how we fund the – sorry, that is \$1.8 million for the upcoming school year – and those numbers we can actually start to get as we start seeing enrollment rates coming through. We will definitely take it back to the departments and look at those. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Time has expired. If you would like, I can put your name back on. Thank you. Next, we have Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To clause 2, from Hay River. There has been lots of talk of junior kindergarten ever since the Minister was just a lowly regular

Member in social programs. Some people in Hay River are philosophically opposed to junior kindergarten, for whatever reason. They don't think children should be in school. Some people are unsupportive of the idea of early childhood education. I feel that we already have the facilities needed in Hay River.

While Hay River might be equipped to educate our four-year-olds, I am aware that other communities aren't. My first question to the Minister is: if this clause is struck out or if this bill does not pass, what happens to junior kindergarten henceforth? Does the department continue to pursue this initiative? Is it going to attempt to coerce schools to run junior kindergarten programs? Is it going to offer to fund junior kindergarten programs? What is going to happen to junior kindergarten if this bill is defeated or this clause is struck down? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First and foremost, this government has set out a mandate in the 18th Legislative Assembly to provide early childhood programs throughout the NWT. This will, however, significantly change how we roll out junior kindergarten to our communities. All education authorities are well into their implementation efforts into junior kindergarten and making it a reality in every school come this academic year, in 2017-18. The 20 communities that currently run junior kindergartens have been doing it very well, and it has been received there very well and are highly successful.

I can't make really definite comments to the Member's questions, but it is mandated by this 18th Assembly that we do provide early childhood programming and early childhood development, and those discussions would have to take place, should that happen, and also discussions taken back to my Cabinet colleagues to find solution. But I just want to assure the Member that we are committed to providing early childhood programs throughout the Northwest Territories, and junior kindergarten is one of those areas that we can implement it. We do have 12 communities in the Northwest Territories that currently do not have any day cares or day homes, and it is something that we see as a positive, moving forward, providing those to families that do need the development programs for their children entering school. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Moses. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, just to clarify, the department's position is that, if Bill 16 is defeated, it will continue to fully fund, in its own words, junior kindergarten in the Northwest Territories; is that correct? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I mentioned, we are mandated to run early childhood programs, according to this bill and this specific program. Those discussions would have to be made afterwards, but, as I said, this government is mandated, it is a priority, of the 18th Legislative Assembly to provide early childhood programs throughout the Northwest Territories, and I do believe Members, with the passion that they have, understand the value of some of these programs going in our communities and appreciate the support from the general comments that were made

around the room earlier. At the end of the day and much like it said in the report from committee, regardless of the outcome, both sides want to do what is in the best interests of the child, and I strongly believe that. Otherwise, it would not have been put into the committee report. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want people to understand the consequences if this bill or this clause is defeated. I want to know what the alternatives are. The Minister has stated that those discussions have to be had, so has the department not at all prepared itself for the possibility that this bill could be defeated, or has it talked about what might happen if the bill is defeated? Because teachers have been hired; some renovations, I am not sure if they are underway yet, but I am sure plans have been made.

So what would happen, is my question, if this bill is defeated? Is the department going to continue to try to push this onto school boards? Does it have the power to force it onto school boards? I just want a clear answer. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Okay, Mr. Simpson. That is more hypothetical, but we will let the Minister answer if he would like to. Thank you. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Yes, all I can say to that question -- and you said it perfectly, Mr. Chair, that is a hypothetical question -- we do not know what the outcome of this bill is going to be at the end of today, but I can let the Member and the Members know that, as a government, we are committed to providing early childhood programs. We developed an Early Childhood Development Action Plan in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Services. We are working with schools, education bodies, to address those. We have made increases to our early childhood program funding, and we are working with day cares and looking at setting up day cares in the communities, as well, so we have done a lot of work. We are going to continue to look at early childhood programs as a priority during the term of this 18th Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, I guess what I got from that is that the department -- not hypothetically, what would happen. I guess I was asking what were the department's plans. Has the department planned and has it come up with a plan, but I am not going to get an answer to that, so I will drop that. We won't know unless it is defeated, and we will see what rolls out, hypothetically.

So, my other question is the Minister has promised to fund this initiative at 12:1, a pupil-teacher ratio of 12:1, and I think, if you look in the schedule of the Child Day Care Act regulations, if a day care has four-year-olds in it, it needs to be staffed at 9:1. I know that is zero to four, but, if a day care only has four-year-olds in it, it is still 9:1, I believe, and I could be wrong. So why is a classroom with four-year-olds only to be staffed at 12:1? Why is there a lower threshold than a day care or day home? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As previously stated when this question has come up in previous committee meetings and public hearings, at the 12:1 ratio and the four-year-old in the school, in the school building they will have access to other resources in the school, school support teams, counsellors, EAs, principals, so they will have more resources in the school system. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have talked to the people in the schools, and they do not buy that answer. They do not think that is an acceptable answer, and that is why I brought it up, because I was looking for an answer that I could bring back to my constituents that they could at least respect.

My final question is, I guess, how will we -- you know what, I will just leave it there for now. Continue on. Thank you to the Minister for his answers.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Questions on clause 2.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Next, we have Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We will just keep going back and forth all night here. I wanted to bring up a little concern that one of my constituents brought up last year. His partner is actually working in junior kindergarten last year, and they are really concerned that they were not really expecting to have to deal with -- because, from what I understand, let's say a three-year-old who is turning four in, say, December, then they are eligible to attend. You know, in some cases, some of the students that are going to junior kindergarten are still in Pampers. It was a huge concern that they were not, when they went to school to become a teacher, they did not really plan to be having to change Pampers in the early grades, so I am hoping that as we move forward that there is a lot of training, whether it is over the summer as they prepare for next year, just so all the staff are prepared and we have assistants coming on so that they get all the proper early childhood training that they need to be dealing with this as we move forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you. I will go to my assistant deputy minister to answer that one. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Mueller.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, it is actually very common for even kindergarten children who are five years old to have accidents in school, and so this is something that is just a fact that a lot of our primary teachers, elementary teachers, do have to deal with for kindergarten, for five-year-olds and even into grade 1. But what is found is children, when they are with other children who are not experiencing that, are not in diapers and are toilet-trained, is that very quickly the majority of children also want to be toilet-trained and it just naturally happens because they want to. They see their peers not having to be in the situation of diapers, so that is actually something that

happens.

The other thing, we have developed information both for parents' information sheets, both for the parents and for the teachers as well, through our JK teacher training that just took place a few weeks ago and will happen again in September. This is a topic that is discussed, and a lot of solutions are given to the teacher as different strategies to work with the parents.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Mueller. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just another thing, I have received some concerns that it is a little too early for four-year-olds to be going to school, but I know the research has shown that between three to five years old is the best time to actually start preparing them for when they get into kindergarten and grade 1. I am hoping that the parents and grandparents will see the advantages of junior kindergarten as we move forward, just so the students are well-prepared once they get into kindergarten and grade 1. I have seen the benefits of my child going to the pilot project in Tsiigehtchic when it first began. Just more of a comment. Thank you.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Would the Minister like to respond?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Yes. I just want to emphasize again that the rollout of junior kindergarten is still optional for parents to enrol their four-year-olds into the program. It is still optional. Thank you.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Clause 2. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I will try this one more time. I will try to make it as easy as I can. I went quickly through the 2017 school funding framework. I have identified the specific formulas that do not include junior kindergarten and they are as follows:

Administration

- i. Administration staffing
- iii. District education authority O and M

Territorial schools

- iii. School support consultants
- iv. School counselling
- v. School secretaries
- vi. Custodians

Inclusive schooling

- iv. Support assistance
- vi. Staff development

- vii. Specialized learning materials, assistive technologies
- x. Healing and counselling

Aboriginal Language and Cultural Programs

- i. Aboriginal language O and M
- ii. Education assistance and Aboriginal language specialists

Those are the formulas that do not include junior kindergarten students. Can the Minister commit to using his projections of JK students, plugging them into those formulas, and telling us what the additional incremental costs would be? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Under the Education Act, it requires that, when providing operation and maintenance funds to education bodies, the Department of Culture, Education, and Employment must allow for a student ratio of 16 to 1. Funding for inclusive schooling supports equals to 15 per cent of all operations and maintenance funds provided in a financial year.

In terms of inclusive schooling, we do add our students. There is a good chance that we will still be above the legislated levels, and adding junior kindergarten, we will still be around somewhere like 13.1 or 13.4, so we will still be overfunding moving forward. We could look at it. We are still going to have funds that are not going to reach the legislated levels on how we fund the operating and maintenance of our education bodies. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think I heard "look at it" at the end there. Is the Minister committing to do the work and providing us with the information? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I said, we will take a look at it. When we do get the funds back, it is still going to be under, but we fund the ratio of 16 to 1. With the inclusive schooling, we will still be funding above what we fund for inclusive schooling. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Does the Minister have any sense of how long taking a look at it is going to take? Is this something that his Department is prepared to give us in a week or two, or how long would it take to have the work done? I think it is plugging a few numbers into some formulas and getting calculations out the other end and comparing it to what it would be without JK. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. What I can commit to is that we will work with our education authorities, as we have created an accountability framework in reporting for our education authorities on how they spend their dollars for the 2017-2018 school year, and get those exact figures as we move forward. Right now, we are still looking at how many numbers we are going to get, but we can commit to working with our education authorities and getting those exact numbers and providing those reports as we do every year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Clearly the Minister is not going to answer this the way that I want him to. He is not going to do the work. I will have to find another avenue. Perhaps a written question will be the proper way to do this because he is just not cooperating, and it is quite disappointing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. Clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. Clause 4. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Mr. Chair, I would like to propose a motion to amend clause 4(b), and I believe that the text will be distributed at this time. The amended subsection will read that paragraph 4(b) of Bill 16 be amended by striking out 945 hours and substituting 1,000 hours.

SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Motion is in order and being distributed. To the motion, Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am going to refer to the memorandum of understanding that was agreed between the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association and the Government of the Northwest Territories on Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practise, and I am going to quote a segment of the MOU here.

It says, and I quote, "During the life of this collective agreement, the association and the employer agree to work together to explore a range of evidence-based possibilities that may have a positive impact on teacher effectiveness and improved student outcomes. This could include changes to the Education Act and the implementation and subsequent evaluation of structured pilot projects. These pilot projects would include a focus on redirecting up to 100 instructional hours per school year." End of the section that I am quoting there.

Mr. Chair, this is not what happened. We, as a group of MLAs, were not given a range of options. We were given one option, which is Bill 16, the bill in front of us. What we learned through this process is that this initiative does not come from the Education Renewal Initiative. In fact, it is more likely that it came out of negotiations, and that it was an add-on to satisfy legitimate - and I am going to repeat that - legitimate concerns teachers have about their own wellness. We, of course, want teachers to be well and to

be ready to do the innumerable tasks which we now require of them in the classroom. But, as I said earlier, we were not presented a range of options. We were given our marching orders, and we were expected to comply with them.

What we need here is more teachers, simply put. We, as I have already said, expect a tremendous amount of our teachers. The classroom has become a much more complex place than it was when I graduated almost 40 years ago. Teachers are required to take into account so many more student needs and to accommodate them in ways that certainly were not acknowledged in my era, and that is not a bad thing, but there is a limit to what they can do.

I want to say that we have had a tremendous amount of input from the teachers on the student instructional practice. I would like to correct the record in saying that there were 27 submissions rather than 230 formal submissions on this bill, but I also have to say that I received at least as many personal e-mails from both teachers and parents on this issue, and I know that many of my colleagues did as well. The people who were least heard from were the parents, and even less than them, the students. They seemed to be running behind afterwards because they did not have the communication in a proactive way, whether that is the responsibility of the school boards or whether that was the responsibility of the department.

Not surprisingly, they were very concerned about the parity of the high school diploma granted by the NWT with that granted by Alberta as the two jurisdictions share a common curriculum as we all know.

The Yellowknife Catholic schools responded to this question about providing certainty to parents by passing a motion at its February board meeting saying that they would not reduce hours at St. Patrick High School here in Yellowknife lower than 1,000 in order to maintain that parity. Their argument was that the students all write the same exams, and that they needed to have equal access to preparation.

The comparison with Alberta is really the only one that matters here because we teach the same curriculum. The comparison to other jurisdictions in Canada is not relevant. When the department came to brief the standing committee on this bill in February, the Deputy Minister confirmed that parity was an important issue, and she pledged that it would be place. In an attempt to find a middle ground between ensuring that teachers are not only well, but they have the time to collaborate and to engage in professional development, and that parents have the certainty that their children in high school will receive the same number of instructional hours as children in Alberta. My proposal is to reduce the instructional hours, not by 100 but by 45. The original Act says, 1045. I am suggesting 1000. That gives teachers an additional 45 hours to spend on ways to improve their own health and their outcomes, and it would provide certainty for parents that there is parity with Alberta.

Now, this MOU is not the collective agreement. It is a pilot project. What the department has done is just moved directly into legislating this change. I do not think that is the right thing to do. I think that we should maintain parity with Alberta for high school, and we should evaluate, and I know the department is coming forward with an evaluation plan. Evaluate how this is rolling out before we reduce the hours any further. And we also

need to keep in mind that Alberta is going through this exercise as well. So, they may also decide that they want the change in their current mandatory minimums, and so that may prompt changes further in the future.

Just to summarize, the intention of this motion is to find a middle ground between the certainty that parents told us they wanted for their children's education, and the wellness that the teachers' said that they need in order to find their work satisfying, and the outcomes for their students satisfying as well.

For that reason, I am putting forward this motion. I have already had significant consultation on this motion with my colleagues. It is my understanding that they will not be supporting it, but I think it is important that we acknowledge that we also heard from parents that they have this issue, that it is a valid issue, that we have heard them, and in the case of this motion by me, that I support them in wanting to have this standard of education for their children. Those are my comments, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. To the motion, Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Sorry, to me, or to Minister Moses? Sorry, confusion here.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): To the motion, Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When we looked at this motion and looked at it, I went out and did some research. I talked to a number of people including Mr. Oliver and some of the people on the committee. Basically, from my understanding in talking with the people there is that it is a minimum of 945, but a majority, except for maybe one school presently has over 1000 hours in senior high from 10 to 12. This group, this committee is looking at it and saying that there is a minimum 945.

As my friend from Yellowknife Centre talked about, we do need more teachers. I love what Alberta has done. They have taken it and put 907 hours but they still have their instructional hours there, so that means there has to be more teachers in there. Unfortunately, that was not part of the bill. That was not part of what we were trying to get at. The comments about the standards, our education system, we do not require hours. It is course load. You actually don't even have to graduate to attend university. You need to have the equivalence of the courses to attend which basically means that if you have the courses and the marks, and you may be entered into the program if accepted. The one big requirement is the English-30-1 and 30-2, and that is the same. That is what we have to require for it.

At this point in time, I understand. I have heard from the parents. I have heard from the teachers. I have heard. I have gone out. I have looked at it, and unfortunately, I cannot support this bill, and I will be voting against it. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The amendment, sorry. The amendment, sorry. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. To the motion, Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just like to thank my Honourable friend, the member for Nahendeh, for laying out some of these considerations. I, too, have consulted with some people on this issue. The crux of it is, the NWT students graduate with an NWT senior secondary diploma, and not an Alberta education diploma; and

although there are some course equivalencies through the NWT senior secondary diploma such as the Alberta 30-1 or 30-2 language arts course, ultimately, the NWT's diploma is standalone. Universities do not require 1,000 hours when they are considering the NWT's senior secondary diploma. Whether an NWT student has 1,000 hours of instruction per year for grades 10 to 12 has nothing to do with whether or not they will be accepted to post-secondary institutions.

I appreciate where the mover is coming, and she clearly laid out her case for why compromise is preferable to something imperfect, however, in this case, I think the diploma speaks for itself, and how those diplomas are considered by post-secondary institutions, and as a result, I will not be supporting this amendment. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. To the motion. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the Member for bringing forward this proposed amendment. As Minister responsible for education, I believe that the NWT superintendents, principals, and teachers know their students best. They want their students to be successful as do all of us here in this House and to have a variety of options available to them upon completion of their high school program.

Schools will schedule the appropriate hours of instructions that they believe their students require to successfully complete their coursework. I think it is important for all Members to remember that the proposed 945 hours of instruction represents the minimum hours of instruction, not the maximum hours of instruction. Therefore, schools will still be able to schedule more than 945 hours if they feel it best meets the needs of their students.

Mr. Chair, schools will inevitably make the best decisions for scheduling the appropriate hours of instruction for their students to require successful completion of their high school programs. Therefore, Cabinet is not in a position to support this motion before us. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. First off, I'd like to thank my colleague from Yellowknife Centre for bringing forward the motion. I think I heard many of the same concerns from parents that she has. I think this was an attempt to try to find some middle ground or some kind of a compromise here and ensure Alberta equivalency and I commend her for bringing it forward. It's very important that the public hear the debate and discussion around this matter because it's still a live concern with many parents.

I can agree with my colleague from Yellowknife Centre to a certain point. She said many of the same things that I said in my opening remarks on the Bill itself that the change in instructional hours was not found in the education renewal. This was driven by the fiscal strategy of Cabinet, the compromise that was reached at the negotiating table, and I believe we need to get back to the education renewal initiative as the way of bringing forward further change to our educational system.

I agree that we need to invest more in our school system. Unfortunately, this Bill has only given us one way of dealing with the issue of teachers being overworked and that's reducing instructional hours. I guess I can vaguely remember back to my time in the 1970s when I applied for university. The thing that you submit when you want to get into college and university is your transcript -- the courses you took, and the marks that you got in them. That's the basis on which universities and colleges accept students.

There's nothing in there about instructional hours. I'm not convinced that this amendment will change in any way the ability of our students to gain entry into universities or colleges.

The last thing, I guess, I wish to say is that as I understand it, the Alberta system -- their high school level there -- instructional hours are in a state of flux themselves. I think it's very difficult to specify what exactly Alberta equivalency is at this point in time let alone probably any point in time. For those reasons, I don't think I can support -- I will not be supporting the motion but I do sincerely thank my colleague for bringing this matter forward for the debate and discussion on the floor today. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. To the motion. Seeing no further comments, I will turn to Ms. Green to close debate on this motion. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, when one applies to university, nobody is interested in how many hours you spend in a classroom. What they're interested in is what your marks are and I continue to believe that in order for NWT students to be competitive in departmental exams and have the best chance to compete with Alberta students for post-secondary education that they need the mandatory minimum instructional hours in high school to be set at 1,000.

The last thing I want today just reflect on is that it is a mystery to me and has been for many months here that the Department is adamant that every school have JK and it be uniform in every school, but when it comes to mandatory minimum instructional hours, every school can make up its own mind. Is it Department setting the standards or is it whimsical? This is not clear to me as a result of this debate on Bill 16. I'd like to request a recorded vote.

RECORDED VOTE

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. The Member has requested a recorded vote. To all those in favour, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Ms. Green.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. Moses, Ms. Cochrane, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. McLeod Yellowknife South, Mr. McLeod Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Schumann, Mr. Sebert, Mr. Blake, Mr. McNeely, Mr. Vanthuyne, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mr. O' Reilly.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): All those abstaining, please stand. The results of the recorded vote are one in favour, 15 opposed, 0 abstentions. The motion is defeated.

---Defeated

Clause 4. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 60 be amended by adding the following after Clause 4. The following is added after subsection 126, subsection 4, subsection 5, the Legislative Assembly or committee of the Legislative Assembly designated or established by it shall review the hours of instruction prescribed under subsection 4 at the next sitting following July 1, 2020.

Subsection 6, the review shall include an examination of the hours of the instruction in effect of those hours of instruction on students and teachers and may include any recommendations for change to the hours of instruction.

Subsection 7, the Minister shall provide a reasonable assistance to the Legislative Assembly or committee of that it is designated or established for the purpose of this section. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. There's a motion on the floor. The motion has been distributed as an order. To the motion. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I said previously, I did contact a number of people in the union and in the Department and spoke about this. The union agrees. We need to do an evaluation and move forward and so has the Department talked about their evaluation. What committee has done is remodeled our – modeled after the statutory requirement to review the official language act, established options to formally engage a committee, the Legislative Assembly in reviewing of its items or significant changed interest.

We also picked the date of saying we wanted the sitting as of July 1st, which normally will be September or October sitting, so this will be reviewed at that time.

Review of the Bill or this amendment would need to cover hours of instruction and their effects on the students' achievements and its teachers while we're looking at how it's impacting not just the teachers but also the students, seeing how it works on it.

Finally, through this whole process, the reviewing committee may make formal recommendations to the government coming out of the review. In other words, we'll make formal reviews. It won't be a tabled document. This is the reason the committee moved forward. As we said previously, we have talked to everybody and this is something that we feel would be a good amendment to the Bill to make it more operational, functional, and, I guess, a good piece of legislation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. To the motion. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I will be supporting this amendment to the bill. If you look at the memorandum of understanding, this change in instructional hours was clearly characterized as a pilot project, which means that it is going to be evaluated at the end of it. This was not meant to be a permanent change necessarily, but the way the bill was drafted, this was going to be a permanent change in instructional hours. We

had this drawn to our attention by some parents. I noticed it when I first read the bill. This is a permanent change. Where is the review of this?

I believe that this amendment to make the mandatory review is completely consistent with the pilot project nature of the change in instructional hours. The issue of evaluation reporting of the changes in instructional hours and student outcomes and teacher wellness has been a source of concern for parents and MLAs. While there is greater clarity than when we started the review of this bill, I do not feel confident or comfortable leaving such a review in the control of the Minister or his department. I am also concerned about our ability to actually measure meaningful changes in teacher wellness and student outcomes on an annual basis or even after three years, something other jurisdictions do not seem to be able to do.

Given the very poor communications from the Minister and his department around these changes, the evaluation should be done by an independent party or a standing committee of this Assembly, while recognizing that the Minister will make the final decisions at the end of the day, and I am sure he would consult with it Northwest Territories Teachers' Association and the superintendents.

I also want to speak to the scope of the review that is suggested in this amendment. The scope of the review is focused on student achievement, which we have heard is the main purpose of this portion of the bill, and teacher wellness. I think that sets out the scope of the evaluation, the review that would be carried out, perfectly clear. That would be done by an independent party, by a standing committee. I support that as well. I will be voting in support of this amendment. I believe this was a reasonable compromise that was put forward by the standing committee. I heard most of their deliberations and discussion on this, and I strongly support this. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Next, Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it is more than reasonable to have an expectation of independent oversight over the pilot project by the Legislative Assembly after there has been so much confusion leading up to this place. Although Honourable Members may have a better handle on it as anyone listening to the debate today can clearly hear, there are still many unanswered questions and many concerns raised by both parents and teachers. This amendment will allow for that independent oversight that would go alongside the internal department evaluation, and I think it is an excellent measure to allow both the department to do its work and for the Legislative Assembly to ensure that this pilot project is meeting the needs of both teachers and students. For that reason, I support it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the Member for bringing forward the proposed amendments. I also believe that a detailed thorough evaluation of the STIP pilot project is critical to ensuring it is successful in achieving our goals of improved students outcomes by providing teachers with time to focus on developing their instructional practises. This is why I publicly committed to share the evaluation framework with Standing Committee on Social Developments before the end

of the school year and to continue working with the committee over the source of the three-year pilot.

I have also committed to providing regular public updates on the implementation, monitoring, and outcomes of STIP. This evaluation will not be conducted by the Department on its own. Instead, it will be jointly conducted by the STIP committee made up of residents from the NWT Superintendents' Association, the NWT Teachers' Association, and the Department of Culture, Education, and Employment. The STIP committee is an unprecedented collaboration between government, school board, and the teachers' association and collectively represents the education experts of our territory.

As we look to go forward with implementing STIP, we anticipate having all 49 NWT schools taking part and trialling their own unique school calendars. Already, each proposed calendar has been carefully vetted by the STIP committee before approval. We are under no illusions that all calendars will be equally successful. We will learn from each example, and schools will actively share their success and areas for improvement.

Mr. Chair, given the complexity of this initiative and the many ways it will evolve over the next three years, I strongly believe that STIP committee is in the best position to review this initiative, and as a result, Cabinet is not in a position to support this motion. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister Moses. Seeing no one further on my list, I will return to the mover of the motion to close debate. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the people that spoke to this. I stand by the committee's recommendations. I think it is a good compromise, as my friend from Frame Lake has spoken about. At the end of the day, it is about what is good for the students and the teachers. I guess, from our side, we are going to allow an open vote. People are going to vote as they feel fit. That is how we will move forward, and I would like to request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Recorded Vote

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. A recorded vote has been requested. All those in favour, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Thompson, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Green, Mr. Testart.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. Moses, Ms. Cochrane, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. McLeod - Yellowknife South, Mr. McLeod - Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Schumann, Mr. Sebert, Mr. Blake, Mr. McNeely, Mr. Vanthuyne.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): All those abstaining, please stand. The results of the recorded vote are four in favour, twelve opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is defeated.

---Defeated

Clause 4. Mr. Testart.

COMMITTEE MOTION 106-18(2):

BILL 16: AN ACT TO AMEND THE EDUCATION ACT – AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE 4
(RE: MANDATORY REVIEW OF HOURS OF INSTRUCTION AFTER THREE YEARS
BY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT)

MR. TESTART: Merci, Monsieur le President. I move that Bill 16 be amended by adding the following after clause 4:

4.1. The following is added after subsection 126(4):

(5) The Department of Education, Culture, and Employment shall review the hours of instruction prescribed under subsection (4) within six months following the conclusion of the 2019-2020 academic year.

(6) The review shall consist of an examination of the hours of instruction, the effectiveness of the administration and implementation of the hours of instruction, and the achievement of the objectives behind the hours of instruction.

(7) The Minister shall consult with the Legislative Assembly, or a committee of the Legislative Assembly designated or established by it, in the review referred to in subsection (5).

(8) The Minister shall table a report in the Legislative Assembly detailing the outcome of the review referred to in subsection (5)

(a) at the sitting of the Legislative Assembly during which the report is completed; or

(b) at the next sitting of the Legislative Assembly, if the Legislative Assembly is not sitting when the report is completed.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess we will try this again with different language. The intention here is to ensure that there is a mandatory review of this pilot project that is enshrined in legislation. It is very clear that the many concerns that have led us to such an extensive debate around these issues are well-reflected once the pilot project has run its course.

This amendment will enshrine the process that the Minister of Education has laid out in numerous public statements into the act itself and will allow both the government and the committee to work together to ensure that the objectives of the STIP hours are well-understood after the pilot runs its course. I appreciate that the Minister has laid out his case for working with the STIP committee, and this work will now go – if this amendment is passed, that work will go on with full partnership with the standing committee.

Furthermore, this amendment can be found in other examples of legislation that this government is bound by, and is a good way to ensure sober second thought to major issues of important public policy. And as we know, parents and teachers have a vested interest in ensuring this project is successful. For that reason, I would ask my colleagues, the Honourable Members of this Chamber to support this amendment moving forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. To the motion, Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and as stated in my previous comments, we are committed to giving updates on the implementation, monitoring the outcomes of STIP, as well as continuing to work with our STIP committee, and with the Standing Committee on Social Programs, to give them updates as well. The motion that was brought before us, currently in front of us here, is one that Cabinet can support, and we will also be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Moses. I see no further comments. Oh, Mr. Vanthuyne. To the motion.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and yes, I think that this sort of reaffirms what the department has been articulating all along, and something that I believe, and that is that ultimately, the Department of Education is wholly responsible for education in the NWT; and the language in this amendment ties the department to that responsibility, and still allows us and regular members to have a fairly strong level of, call it, contribution that will hold the department to account.

The language now starts to include the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. It refers to the Minister, and that he shall consult with a committee of the Legislative Assembly, and it also indicates that the Minister shall table a report detailing the outcomes of the review.

This is the kind of amendment that I can find myself in support of. Frankly, with all due respect, the prior amendment that was trying to kind of attain the same objectives, really didn't put the department out there for being accountable. It was putting, in my view, the standing committee or the Legislative Assembly committee of whatever sort to be more accountable on the review. I believe now that we are putting that onus back on the Department of Education where it ought to be, and I will be in support of the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. To the motion. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think it's important to understand that this only came in response to the work of the standing committee, and this was a hard fought battle to try to get a mandatory review period. I guess the other thing I want to mention, I think this is a poor cousin compared to the previous amendment but I cannot speak to that again.

There are two areas that concern me greatly with the amendment that is proposed. The

first is this idea of consulting with the committee. I think I have been here for almost, getting close to two years, and kind of consultation I have seen from my Cabinet colleagues with standing committees is left a lot to be desired. I am very concerned about what sort of consultation the Minister – it is probably going to be the Minister over there, would undertake with the standing committee. If the Minister wishes to speak to that, I would appreciate hearing from him on what sort of consultation – if he was to continue, you would expect with the standing committee as part of this review. That is one of my major concerns.

The second one is the scope of the review that is proposed in this amendment. The scope of the review is – I must read this out because I am not sure everybody has really read this. “The effectiveness of the administration and implementation of the hours of instruction.” What does that got to do with student wellness or – sorry, student outcomes or teacher wellness? And then, “the achievement of the objectives behind the hours of instruction,” I’m not clear what the objectives are right from the start. There seems to be a shifting target here. If the Minister can convince me that the objectives of this review includes student achievement and teacher wellness, I would much appreciate that. I see the five bullets from his statement introducing the bill today here. We have got teacher satisfaction. Teacher human resource stats such as sick days. Use of professional development time, student attendance and student course completions. I am looking for something a bit more holistic like student outcomes. Are more students passing than before? Are they getting better grades and so on? That is a far more, I think, important indicators of student achievement. I am looking for some reassurance from the Minister that the scope of the review is actually going to deal with student achievement and student wellness, and I don’t get that from what I see in the amendment before us. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O’Reilly. I will remind you that the amendment was moved by Mr. Testart, not by the Minister, and the Minister is on the witness seat and under no responsibility, or under no obligation to answer questions.

I see no further comments or questions. I will return to the mover to close debate. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As with all things we do in this great institution of democracy, compromise is essential to ensuring we make good decisions to our people, and I am very thankful to have the support of cabinet on this amendment. I am also thankful to the Honourable Member for Yellowknife North for showing his support, and to the concerns raised by the Honourable Member for Frame Lake.

The current Minister is not really in a position to speak to this amendment as it will take place well after the term of this Assembly. I have great hopes and expectations that the Minister at that time in the future, gazing in my crystal ball, will follow the aspirations of this amendment very clearly, and work diligently with the standing committee as designated by the Legislative Assembly to complete this review to the satisfaction of all parties. I believe strongly that this is an effective compromise that will bring legislative oversight to this very important issue of ensuring that this project achieves its desired results. It improves teacher wellness, and gives our teachers the flexibility they need to educate the next generation of Northerners. And I would like to ask for a recorded vote.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Recorded Vote

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. The member has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Green, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. Moses, Ms. Cochrane, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. McLeod Yellowknife South, Mr. McLeod Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Schumann, Mr. Sebert, Mr. Blake, Mr. McNeely, Mr. Vanthuyne.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

The result of the recorded vote are 16 in favour; zero opposed; and zero abstentions.

---Carried

Clause 4 as amended.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. Clause 5.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. Committee, to the bill as a whole as amended. Does committee agree that Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Education Act as Amended is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Bill 16 is now ready for third reading. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 16, An Act to Amend to the Education Act as Amended?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. Minister, thank you to you and your witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, you may escort the witnesses from the Chamber. Minister, you may take your seat.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Committee Report 10-18(2), Report on the Review of Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Education Act. I will go to the chair of the Standing Committee for any opening remarks. That will be the Standing Committee on Social Development, for any opening remarks he may have. Mr. Thompson, do you have any opening remarks?

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we have heard the report enough. I think the report stands for itself, and I will just leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess it has been a very long day. Mr. Chair, I move that this Assembly recommend that the government provide a comprehensive response to this report and its recommended actions within 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. There is a motion on the floor. It is being distributed. To the motion. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will request a recorded vote. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to go on record, again commending the committee for its very hard work on this report. I fully support the recommended actions as well as the recommendation for the motion. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Recorded Vote

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. To the motion. Question has been called. The Member has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Thompson, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Green, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. Blake, Mr. McNeely, Mr. Vanthuyne, Mr. Testart.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Moses, Ms. Cochrane, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. McLeod - Yellowknife South, Mr. McLeod - Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Schumann, Mr. Sebert.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): The results of the vote are nine in favour; zero opposed, seven abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Does committee agree that consideration of Committee Report 10-18(2) is now concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. We have concluded consideration of Committee Report 10-18(2), Report on the Review of Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Education Act. What is the wish of committee, Mr. Testart?