

JULIE GREEN—MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
Inclusive Schooling
Committee of the Whole—2018-2019 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Education, Culture and Employment—February 20, 2018

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on page 41, I see that the revised estimates for the current fiscal year and the estimate for the next is the same for inclusive schooling, and yet, in the budget address, the Minister announced there would be an additional \$881,000 available for inclusive schooling. Could the Minister please clarify? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That announcement of the extra funding was done towards the end, at the last minute before the mains were printed, so it will be reflected. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. It will be reflected where? Could you please clarify?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Sorry. It will be reflected in the overall commitment that we made with that \$881,000 and what was made in my statement in the opening address, as the mains were printed before we made that change for the increased inclusive schooling for \$881,000. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. So this money will come through a supplementary appropriation? Is that what you are saying?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Yes, that is correct.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the clarification from the Minister on that. My next question has to do with reworking the inclusive school funding. Could the Minister please provide us with an indication of whether there is any work going on to rework the inclusive schooling funding formula? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you. In terms of the funding formula for inclusive schooling, not at this moment. We are still going to use the same formula.

I just want to correct myself, that it is not through a supplementary appropriation that we will be bringing that \$881,000 for inclusive schooling. It will be an internal reallocation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to go back now to the inclusive schooling money. Where is the money coming from? That is the \$881,000. Which program or programs is it being reallocated from? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If you look at the program detail under schools, it is coming out of that line item. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Am I correct in understanding that it is coming out of Schools, and it is going back into schools versus inclusive schooling? It is just changing hands within the same pot; is that correct? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, that is correct, internal reallocation of that funding. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Mr. Chair, I am going to go out on a limb and say that the schools are not going to be very happy to know that they are losing \$881,000 from one allocation in order to have inclusive schooling funded from that same amount of money. What we had been led to believe is that there was additional money for inclusive schooling available in this budget, and now it seems we have been misled, unless I am missing something. Where is the additional money for inclusive schooling, or isn't there any? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That \$881,000 for inclusive schooling that we had mentioned, when we did put the funding out there for junior kindergarten for funding, we did not get full enrolments of all grade 4, so there was a surplus of money for that money that the Finance Minister had brought in the last budget. Because we did not get full enrolments in junior kindergarten, that surplus from that money that reallocated for JK, we are using to reallocate internally to fund inclusive schooling. I will go to Mr. Lovely for a bit more clarification. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. LOVELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As you are aware, there is about \$155 million that we provide to education authorities, and that is broken up into administration, territorial schools, inclusive schooling, and Indigenous languages.

A large component of what we provide to the schools is based on the number of students who are enrolled. In any given year, the budgets will vary depending on the enrolment. This past year, we saw enrolments across the education system decrease by 1.8 per cent. Instead of returning that money back into the consolidated revenue fund, we received permission to include that into the inclusive schooling. Rather than seeing the budget go down by \$881,000, it maintained itself at that rate. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Lovely. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand what the witness had to say there, but what I am concerned about is: if enrolment rebounds over the next school year, where will the money for inclusive schooling come from at that point? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is the first year that we have had the territorial implementation of junior kindergarten throughout the Northwest Territories. We did mention that we were going to continue to monitor and evaluate. Should enrolments rebound, we do go through a business planning process with our operations budget on a yearly basis and have those discussions then. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would like more certainty around the funding for inclusive schooling. I would like it to be added to the base going forward so that there is certainty that there is money for all grades for inclusive schooling, since it is so critical to their success. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I can confirm that the reallocation of the funding that we have put into inclusive schooling for this year is added to the base. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to clarify, does that mean that that money is going to be available for every year going forward? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is dependent on enrolment. We go through the funding formula when we look at enrolments in the school, so it will be based on enrolments. Thank you.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, what I have heard from the various meetings we have had with school trustees is that there is a great need for inclusive schooling money in order to diagnose and assist children with learning disabilities as quickly as possible. For that reason, I am going to say that this is an area that needs constant support, that the schools cannot be going up and down according to enrolment each year. They have to have a reliable amount of money for inclusive schooling. To that end, will the Minister consider adding a fixed amount of money for inclusive schooling going forward and/or rework the formula to ensure that there is certainty for school boards? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Currently, we fund inclusive schooling at 15 per cent; sorry, we are legislated at 15 per cent. We are currently funding school

boards at 17.3 per cent. We did increase this funding for junior kindergarten with an internal reallocation, and we will look at it on a year-to-year basis based on enrolments. We did meet with our education leaders, and we did hear the same thing. I think this increase in funding for this year with the first rollout of junior kindergarten is definitely going to help. Thank you, Mr. Chair.