

JULIE GREEN—MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
Junior Kindergarten and Inclusive Schooling Funding Formula
Committee of the Whole—2018-2019 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Education, Culture and Employment—February 21, 2018

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. When we left off yesterday, there was a bit of confusion, and I was wondering if the Minister or his witnesses would like to address the issue that we were discussing yesterday and perhaps try to clear some of that up. Minister.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, it was in terms of the internal reallocation of the inclusive schooling dollars for junior kindergarten, and I will ask my assistant deputy minister, Mr. Olin Lovely, to go into detail for a little bit of an explanation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. LOVELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to clarify, in any given year, enrolments will go up and down. The funding formula will go up and down based on that because enrolments are a major component of that framework.

This past year, we saw enrolments go down by 1.8 per cent, resulting in money that would normally go back to the Department of Finance. Rather than do that, we sought direction and received approval to reallocate that money internally and put it towards including junior kindergarten students in the inclusive schooling formula.

The number of students in junior kindergarten in 2018-2019 amounts to \$881,000. As we progress further down the years, if the complement of students in inclusive schooling goes up, the funding will go up. If the complement of students in inclusive schooling goes down, that funding will go down.

We have provided that information to education authorities. They are budgeting based on including junior kindergarten students as part of their ongoing operations for inclusive schooling. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Lovely. Part of the issue was that the Minister said that the mains were printed before the change was known about. Could the department elaborate on some of the timelines so we have the dates of when the number of students was known, when the Mains were printed, and so on, just for clarification? Thank you.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know Members were looking for the hard-line item in the main estimates here. Maybe I will go back to the assistant deputy minister to show you where the money came from, from the program detail lines, for a little bit more clarity. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. LOVELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If we turn to page 41, the total amount that we give to the education authorities is comprised of the schools line item for \$128,822, the

inclusive schooling component for \$26,724, and we also have money in the previous activity for Indigenous languages of around \$8 to \$9 million. Sorry, it's right here on this page; \$9.5 million will go to the education authorities, plus the minority-language education and Instruction of \$2.6 million.

Each one of these items that I have mentioned will fluctuate based on the enrolments in the schools, and what we ended up doing is that we took the funding from schools of 128. We took the \$881,000 out of there, and it will be moving down to inclusive schooling so that that money will now be about \$27.5 million.

The reason for it not showing up was the main estimates were printed in December. The approval for the junior kindergarten funding reallocation was done later in January. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Lovely. Since this is new information, I will allow committee Members to speak twice to this activity if they wish. First, I have Mr. McNeely on my list.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When adjustments are made, such as the 881 after the print shop is done, is it the department's standard practice to have an amendment to the numbers presented in the printed mains? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, we couldn't do the amendments, because they were printed in December and the decision was made in January. The process of when there were internal reallocations does have to go through a process and have an FMB submission. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Nothing further from Mr. McNeely. Next, I have Mr. Nakimayak on the list, to carry over from yesterday. Mr. Nakimayak.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just on page 42, and we're looking at the healthy food for children and youth. I just have a question. I know we're getting into income security later on. I'm looking at the funding for healthy food for children and youth. I know recently the Department of ECE is giving cash to income security recipients and clients. I'm wondering if that's going to have an uptake on the breakfast program and the food for children and youth such as breakfast programs around the territory, and if that's going to have an effect. I'm just wondering if the department is going to have any forward-thinking issues to mitigate that once that becomes a possible issue across the territory, mainly in smaller communities where there are a lot of income security clients? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. LOVELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's something we need to monitor. With the income assistance, we fund families for their most basic needs. As I mentioned yesterday, we fund breakfast, lunch, and snack programs throughout the Northwest Territories that do have an impact on our students. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Nothing further from Mr. Nakimayak. Next on my list is Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, what I'm wondering is: I follow now the explanation that the assistance deputy minister has given about where the money is being reallocated, and it's enrolment-based and so on. Is this page, page 41 of the main estimates, going to be changed to reflect the reality of the reallocation that the ADM talked about? Thank you.

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

MR. LOVELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Not the main estimates that we're going through right now, but it will be revised in the next 2019-2020 Main Estimates. Thank you.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in terms of creating a record on this commitment, is Hansard the only thing that we have to rely on in order to capture this commitment? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. I will address that to the Minister of Finance. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my apologies to committee. I know that there were a lot of concerns about this particular issue. As far as I was concerned, it was quite straight-forward, but I didn't know that. Recognizing that the committee had a number of questions, I had sent a letter off. I'm not sure if the Chair of standing committee has it yet, but I do have the letter here. I'm not sure how we want to deal with this. This gives a fairly good explanation in writing as to issue that the folks from ECE are talking about. Hopefully, this will help clarify some of that, so Hansard wouldn't be the only record. You would have it. This would be the record you would have of it here.

I think it's fairly straight-forward and it explains it, in my opinion, fairly well. I think it's gone off to the clerk of the committee, but I don't think committee has an opportunity to see it yet.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you, thank you to the Finance Minister for that. Just to complete the record in Hansard, I see the letter isn't long. Could the Finance Minister just read it into the record so that we can put this issue to bed? Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: If it means putting this issue to bed, I will be more than happy to read the letter; it's not very long, if that's okay with the Chair and the Minister and the Premier and the public at large.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I see heads nodding, so, Minister McLeod, please proceed with reading the letter into the record.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the letter is addressed to Mr. Tom Beaulieu, chairman of the standing committee and priorities in planning, 2018-2019 Main Estimates. As was noted in my letter of January 29, 2018, \$881,000 was approved to be reallocated to the inclusion of junior kindergarten enrolments in determining inclusive schooling funding. This amount is included in the \$154.9 million in the education authority contributions described on page 42 and 43 of the 2018-2019 Main Estimates.

As I am sure the Members can appreciate, estimates of enrolments are used for inclusion in the budgeting process from the previous year. Recently it was determined that enrolments had dropped by 1.9 per cent. What the FMB has directed is, rather than lapse the funding and returning it to general revenue, Education, Culture and Employment are to re-direct that funding to inclusive schooling. Should enrolments increase unexpectedly for 2018-2019, the department would seek supplementary funding as appropriate. Other financial commitments identified as part of our agreement will be included as part of the supplementary appropriations number 1 for 2018-2019. I trust this provides the needed clarification. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the Finance Minister for clarifying. I feel like there was another nugget of information in there that we didn't have before. From my point of view, I am completely satisfied that we now understand the money, where it came from, where it's going, and that it will be in place in the next budget. I'd like to thank the Finance Minister for that.