

JULIE GREEN—MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
Childcare Funding
Committee of the Whole—2020-2021 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Finance & ECE — June 10, 2020

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to know how the funding for additional childcare spaces is going to be made available. Is this money going to be made available for childcare associations, for day homes, for parents? What is the plan for this money? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is intended to create an opportunity to help subsidize the cost of space acquisition, renovations, and repairs. It is intended and directed towards early learning and childcare programs. This would be, for example, providing non-government organizations funding for facility repairs or to address code issues and undertake retrofits in order to support having more childcare spaces. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the Minister for that answer. How do organizations access this money? What's the entry point? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is a new program, and I am not sure how far along the Minister of ECE is on it, but he is maybe better placed to at least speak to what state that program is at. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of Finance. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. ECE has regional childcare coordinators in five regions, and they have relationships with the existing programs. They keep themselves apprised of organizations who may wish to start a childcare program. Right now, we have identified criteria. To determine the program's eligibility, there needs to be demonstrated need for physical space that will result in additional new licensed early learning and childcare spaces. The applicant must be able to provide a portion of the cost. Funding can be used to build new buildings or retrofit existing buildings, including both non-GNWT and GNWT assets, and projects will be prioritized to meet demands in areas of greatest need. Right now, we have identified Fort Smith as an area of great need, Norman Wells, and are consulting with the regional childhood coordinators to identify other needs for the remainder of the funds. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of ECE. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Minister for that information. Is it possible for the Minister to put that information in a letter and send it to the Standing Committee on Social Development? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, I would be happy to share this information with the standing committee. As the Minister mentioned, it is quite new, so that information hasn't started flowing yet. I will make sure that happens. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of ECE. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you. My last question in this area is the order in which the money will flow. Is it a first-come-first-approved situation? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is a very new program. There are some places that need childcare, we have known for a long time that need childcare, and we know that infrastructure is the issue. We have identified those places and are working to identify others and are targeting those. I want to make sure that we get some things done. I want to make sure we get some childcare spaces that are going to be sustainable in place, especially where there isn't licensed childcare currently or not a lot of it. It's a bit more targeted, perhaps, but we're going to make sure that we get some things done with this money. Thank you, Madam Chair.