

**THE HONOURABLE ALFRED MOSES
MINISTER OF EDUCATION, CULTURE
AND EMPLOYMENT**

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Funding of Junior Kindergarten

Mr. Speaker, today I rise to provide clarification on the implementation of Junior Kindergarten in the Northwest Territories. I think we can all agree that we want to give NWT children the support they need to thrive and be successful, Mr. Speaker.

Junior Kindergarten is one of the ways this government is going to give the NWT's kids the best start we can. Junior Kindergarten will provide 4-year old children with the necessary foundation for learning in the early years of their life. It provides a safe and caring environment and promotes the cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual and physical development of all children through, play-based approach.

Equitable access to quality programming in our school setting so young children can be ready and prepared for success in the K-12 system is something we can all strive for. That is why it is important to have Junior Kindergarten implemented and available to all parents in all communities in the Northwest Territories in September 2017.

We expect Junior Kindergarten to cost \$5.1 million to implement across the remainder of the communities. As a government, we have committed to fully funding these ongoing costs for the 2017-2018 school year and into the future. We have increased funding in the proposed 2017-2018 GNWT budget and made a commitment to include the remaining funding in the future.

Some people may have wondered why we did not put the full amount in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker. The answer is because the whole amount is not going to be needed in this fiscal year. While Junior Kindergarten will be fully implemented in all communities this September, school board budgets line up with the school year, which means they cross two

GNWT fiscal years. The total cost will also be affected by the actual number of children who enroll in Junior Kindergarten, and so cannot be fully known in advance.

What we do know now is that this government is committed to fully funding Junior Kindergarten, Mr. Speaker, and we will work with boards to make the money they need to implement Junior Kindergarten available to them when it is needed. Once we know the actual enrolment figures, the government will bring a request for supplementary funding to the Legislative Assembly in the fall of 2017 to fully fund implementation.

I would also like to add, the Department will fund the one-time expenses associated with purchase of play-based equipment and for any classroom modifications. As a result of these commitments to fully fund Junior Kindergarten implementation there should be minimal impact on other classroom programming.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.