

**ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE**

**QUESTION 844-18(2):  
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING**

**September 21, 2017**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Education. At the very strong urging of this Assembly and a petition, the Minister committed to fully fund the introduction of junior kindergarten. The Minister tabled a reply to my written question earlier this week regarding the full cost of including JK students in the funding formulae for district education authorities. Is it really the intention of the Minister to fully fund the district education authorities for JK implication and make up this \$1.7 million shortfall for 2017-2018? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I just wanted to clarify that when the Member says that I finally tabled the response to his written questions on September 19<sup>th</sup>, protocol does state, just for the public's record, that we table responses at the earliest convenience, which was September 19<sup>th</sup> and first day of this sitting, and does not have a reflection on myself or the staff.

Now, education authorities have been provided their 2017-2018 funding targets and have prepared their operational plans based on that figure. There is no shortfall in funding. Using the 12:1 ratio that we said we were going to use to staff JK teachers instead of the K-to-9 teaching staffing table, there is an additional \$1.8 million to education authorities for the 2017-2018 school year, which is more than the \$1.6 million that they received under the old formula. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I thank the Minister for his response. I do acknowledge that he tabled the information that I requested at his earliest convenience, but often Ministers will provide it to Members ahead of time. That did not happen in this case. If he has different figures that he wants to quote than the reply to my written question, I would be happy to look at them, but after a lot of wrangling to try to ensure that we have truly fully funded JK, the answers have been evasive at best. We will be reviewing the 2018-2019 business plans beginning in November of this year. Will the Minister commit that full funding of that fiscal year's cost for JK will be included in those business plans?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** During the first year of the territorial implementation of JK, which has just started this school year, specific needs for children with exceptionalities are unknown. After the first full year of territorial JK, ECE will review the needs of the children who are in attendance so we will have a better understanding.

Now, should enrolments increase this year, the education authorities are eligible for additional funds through an extraordinary enrolment formula. We will ensure that a 12:1 staffing ratio exists for junior kindergarten students. As we roll out junior kindergarten, we will have a better understanding and have a better idea of what is needed.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks again to the Minister. I think that was two noes in a row, now.

We are not going to make up the shortfall for this year, and it does not look like we are going to get it for 2018-2019. I think our government really needs to make good on this \$1.7 million gap for 2017-2018. The Minister's May 25<sup>th</sup> reply to the petition committed to "fully funding the ongoing costs of JK implementation, beginning in the 2017-2018 school year and into the future." Will the Minister commit to changing the district education authorities' funding formulae to fully account for JK students to avoid future shortfalls?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** As I mentioned, we still do not know what the full enrolment rates are for students, JK students, entering the JK-12 system. We are working with education authorities to address that. I would like to see where the shortfall that the Member is mentioning is coming from. As I mentioned, we are using the 12:1 ratio that we all agreed upon moving forward within the system, and there is an additional \$1.8 million to address that. I would like to maybe ask the Member if he would not mind sharing where he got his numbers from so that I can share that with my department.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that was a third no. He is not prepared to look at the funding formulae which are the basis for the figures that he himself tabled a couple of days ago in this House. That is where I got the numbers from, was from his own reply to my written question that came from his own department. So, look, the funding for junior kindergarten implementation has been like a zombie; it just keeps coming back for more. Whether it is busing, inclusive schooling, capital improvements, Aboriginal language, custodial services, they are all underfunded or not resolved, but we are into providing junior kindergarten now on the backs of the district education authorities. I want to give the Minister a chance to see what lessons he may have learned. What would the Minister do differently if he had to start all over again with junior kindergarten?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** We are not even a month into the school year, and we have to look at some of the data that we are collecting from our education authorities. We did provide the education authorities with their funding targets. They gave us their operational plans. The education authorities also have a responsibility to roll out their plans within the partnerships that we have with them and the contribution agreements that we have with them. We will wait until we see that data to address it. I have mentioned that education authorities can come back and look at extraordinary enrolment formulas to address some of those areas that they might be needing, so we will wait for that to happen. We are only a month into this academic year, so we will just wait and see as we move forward. Thank you.