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Contract Amounts/Teacher Training/DEA-Board Funding and Shared Services
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MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. At the risk of causing mayhem, I do want to thank, though, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and his staff for the information about the reallocation for inclusive schooling. I think the important thing to take away from this is that it is a good thing. There is now going to be extra money for JK students for 2017-2018. We are getting closer to fully funded for -- the Minister is laughing, as I am, too. In 2018-2019, the formulas are going to be changing, and that is the best solution in the long term. It is a good-news story all around.

I had a peek back at the appropriation bill that we passed for the last budget. We just ended up voting on departmental totals. If there are reallocations within a department, that is not a big deal, but the public sees main estimates. We see main estimates, and if there are changes between when the main estimates are printed and when we start to talk about them on the floor of the House, having a document that summarizes those changes would be helpful in avoiding, perhaps, some of the discussion that we had earlier. I understand now what is happening, and I thank the Ministers for their explanation. It is a good-news story, but maybe we can avoid this in the future.

I want to turn to page 41 of the departmental budget. I had the same question as my colleague about the change in contract services, but I want to move to the travel line, which, from 2016-2017, it was \$1,037,000. In 2018-2019, it has actually doubled now, more than doubled, so can I have some explanation of why there is a big increase in travel happening over a few years? Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. We will take your comments to the Finance Minister as notice. Minister Moses, if you can, go back to the question provided by Mr. O'Reilly. Thank you.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Every year, we hold symposiums, conferences for teachers, and that is included in this budget line. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So, are there extra events that are happening between 2016-2017 and 2018-2019, or are these cyclical conferences or something? I am just trying to understand why there is a doubling of the travel budget between those years. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Like I mentioned, it goes to conferences, training for our education personnel as well as staff and teachers. Just recently with this conference, we had actually brought in our student support staff for the first time, as well as our junior kindergarten teachers. So it is reflective of that, but I do not have a detailed list of all of the upcoming events for this year, if that is what the

Member is referring to. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Okay, I accept that, and I believe that is important for our staff, to be able to have professional development and to bring folks who are experts together to talk about these things. I will leave it alone. I was just trying to figure out: is there a conference that happens every two or three years that results in a larger travel budget, or something? That is okay. I am going to let this one go.

I want to turn, though, to the next page, which I believe contains the contributions to the district education authorities. I know, in last year's budget and I think it is reflected in the business plan, as well -- I know it is reflected in the business plan -- there was to be a reduction of \$200,000 on school administration to the district education authorities. Can the Minister just tell us where that work is at? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That was part of the reduction exercise that the department did, and this is the final year of that exercise. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks to the Minister for that. I understood that there was going to be some kind of a consultant hired to look at potential for shared services amongst the district education authorities. Can the Minister tell us the status of that work and whether the district education authorities are onboard for this reduction of \$200,000? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are in the process of developing a response to those shared services and that exercise we did on the shared services, so we are just currently developing a response to that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks --

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Minister Moses?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Sorry for the confusion, Mr. Chair. Once we get that response formalized, then we will send a letter to standing committee, and we will be sharing that with the education authorities, as well. It was the discussion that we had our last education leaders meeting. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, I recognize this is work under way, but the problem is we are going to have to vote on an appropriation bill maybe before we even get the report. We are going to have to vote on whether we are ready to accept this budget for the department, so when is this report going to be made available? If the report is finished, can the Minister share the report with us and then share the response

from the department afterwards? Once again, we seem to have a problem with getting information from the department. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Moses, to the report.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Well, before the formal response -- and I understand the Member's comments about voting on the page -- the preliminary results that we are seeing are that it is not feasible at this time, with the shared services. We will get something to the Members, and that is something that we will be sharing with the education authorities. What we notice is that all of the education authorities do different things in terms of how they run programs, how they fund their schools, and it is hard to keep one standardized throughout the NWT. Initially, those were some of the early, ongoing results, but we will get something formal to the Members and something that we will share with the education authorities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and I do appreciate the Minister passing along that information. So, if the preliminary results seem to indicate that this is not likely going to work, are we still cutting the funding to the DEAs to \$200,000, or is the Minister suggesting that we should put that money back into the budget? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The education authorities already knew this was happening. This is the second year, and it was already out of their budget coming into this process. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Well, I guess I am concerned that we are continuing to cut if the results of the study seem to indicate that there are no costs savings. So, at the end of the day, the district education authorities are going to be left with less money to work with. That is not what I had hoped from this budget, but I think this is just part of the Cabinet's reduction strategy again, and I do not agree with this cut. I do not expect a response from the Minister. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Moses, did you want to reply to that?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Maybe I will have my deputy minister just comment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Moses. Deputy Minister Haener.

MS. HAENER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The shared services exercise that we undertook with the education authorities was never intended or never had an objective of resulting in budget reductions. That was not one of the outcomes from it. It is an initial effort at trying to streamline our processes and look at ways to have common approaches to administrative processes.

As the Minister indicated, what has come out of that so far is that there are really quite

disparate practices with HR management, with charts of accounts, so we really need to take a step back and do some more basic work around how we approach administrative processes and try to come to some common understandings on that front.

That is a separate exercise from the work that we undertook to achieve reductions to our budgets, so last year there was a \$600,000 reduction to administration, and this year there is a further \$200,000 reduction that is reflected. The education authorities worked with us to understand that and to implement it in a manner that was as feasible as possible. Thank you, Mr. Chair.