

**Supplementary Estimates, No. 4, 2018-2019**  
**Infrastructure Expenditures**  
**Replacement of the Roof at William McDonald School in Yellowknife**

**March 13, 2019**

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am here to present Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 1, 2019-2020. This document provides for an increase of \$4.1 million in the infrastructure budget.

The two items included in these supplementary estimates are:

- \$2.1 million for the Slave Geological Province Corridor project. These expenditures are fully offset by revenues from the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency; and
- \$2 million for the replacement of the roof at William McDonald School in Yellowknife.

That concludes my opening remarks. Mr. Chair, I would be happy to answer any questions that Members might have. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Minister. General comments? Seeing none, we will proceed to the detail. The first voteable item is found on page 6. Education Culture and Employment, early childhood services, \$2 million. Comments or questions from committee? Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Can someone explain to me how we got to a place where \$2 million is required for replacement of the roof of the William McDonald School? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Through you, I would like to defer to Minister Cochrane.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister Cochrane.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The roof at the William McDonald School has, in all honesty, been one of my major stresses for the last few months, ever since I heard there were issues with it. There were some issues put forward in 2016. We found that it had exceeded its life expectancy. They had done some patching. Over the time, though, the YK1 School Board Authority was told not to go on the roof, not by ECE or anyone else except by the contractor who fixed the original roof. They have not gone on the roof.

In the meantime, when they first got it fixed, there were a few little tree seedlings growing. Because no one went on the roof and pulled those seedlings out, they became trees on the roof. It meant that the trees became structural. Now, we are at a place where there are bags and there are buckets being held. There was mould found

because of the constant dripping. It is an issue.

It was planned to replace the roof and the envelope of the school in the 2021 capital planning, but it is too late. We cannot leave children in a place where it is not safe at this time. This is now a health and safety issue, because the mould is actually not good for humans. We contained the mould. We will be fixing it in the spring break. It is going to keep going if we don't fix it.

The responsibility that ECE needs to take in this is that we never really had a firm policy in what our maintenance includes. We have learned from this lesson. Going forward in the new school year, we will be defining a policy that states maintenance includes things such as shovelling snow from the walkways, checking your roof, checking around the premises of the school to make sure that any health and safety issues are addressed. In that way, we do take responsibility, but this is a combination of efforts. I would love to be able to say it can wait to 2020-2021, but it cannot. This is now a health and safety issue that is important to children. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Just in case anyone gets the wrong idea, I want this work to go ahead, and I want it to go as quickly as it can. This is a school that is in my riding, and I want the work done. Can someone tell me when the original roof was put on? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you. I agree with the Member that this is work that needs to be done. We are trying to get the appropriation to do that work. As far as his question on the original roof, we don't have that detail. We would have to commit to get that detail and provide it to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I can tell everybody that the roof was put on in 1981. These things sort of have a natural life cycle. How long has this work been deferred over the years? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister Cochrane.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The roof is in our 20-year capital planning. As stated, the roof and the envelope were assessed and to be done in 2021. However, in 2016, we realized that the roof was needing a complete replacement. At that time, we decided to repair it over the gym. There were sporadic little stop-gap measures. I have never felt personally that doing stop-gap measures are the best strategy, so instead of doing another stop-gap and trying to put tar and paper again, I have taken a request for supplementary funding back to Cabinet and asked to replace the whole roof instead of just doing a piecemeal fix. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that information. I understand that the Minister is going to better define the maintenance policy for our schools. That is a good

thing. As I understand it, back in 2009, there was a report that actually recommended that the whole roof be replaced. This seems like it has been deferred now for maybe as long as 10 years. I wouldn't want anybody to get the idea that this is the fault of YK1 and their maintenance people, by any stretch of anyone's imagination.

I think that there is an issue here with how long we defer capital replacement of our assets, as well. Is that something that the Minister is prepared to work at with maybe her colleague the Minister of Infrastructure? If this has been deferred for 10 years, it is now going to cost us \$2 million, and it could have cost us a lot less if it had been caught in time. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member makes a good point. I am not sure what happened in 2009, but if there is a report that was done, then I am sure that that helped guide some of the decisions that were made, but recently it had been determined that the roof needed to be repaired. I think we may have taken steps to try and complete as much deferred maintenance as possible. It is not about laying blame, here. It is nobody's fault. This is something that happened that we need to look past yesterday and deal with for the children of tomorrow. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, I am all about tomorrow, too, but if we don't learn from the lessons of the past, we are going to keep making the same mistakes over and over again. What I would like to know, though, is: what specifically is this \$2 million for? Is this to actually replace the roof? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Not knowing the exact scope of work, my understanding is that it is for the complete repair of the roof on the school. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. The mould that may be in the walls of the school, when is that going to be worked on? Is that something that is going to happen over the summer, and will that actually cost more than the \$2 million? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister Cochrane.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have to say that YK1 School Board has actually been very proactive in doing this. They have already sprayed, and I am not technical; I don't know what kind of spray, but they have sprayed the mould to contain it. Over the spring break, they will be taking down all of the walls that actually have mould on them, so that work will happen over the spring break, and then the roof will be replaced in the summer. I wanted it to be faster. My Cabinet colleagues reminded me that kids are still in school, so we do have to wait for the school. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. \$2 million is for replacing the roof. Who is paying for the containment work, the work to assess the mould, and so on? Is that something that the GNWT is paying for, and is it in this supplementary appropriation, or does the department already have money for that work? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister Cochrane.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The mould remediation has not been requested from YK1. They do have money in their maintenance budget to address that mould issue. Again, it is tearing down some walls and putting a sealant over the mould, which they have already done, and they do have a surplus. They are looking for the replacement money, support for the replacement of the roof. They have not asked for a replacement for the remediation of the mould. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. If there is a problem, and let's hope that there is not; I am sure that everybody is going to do their best, but if there is additional remediation work that is required within the school, would that be something that would come forward in an additional supplementary appropriation? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As they do their assessment, and as Minister Cochrane said, they do have some money available to them to do some of the work required. However, if it comes to a point where they may not have the money to do some of the work required, then they would come forward to Minister Cochrane, and she would bring it forward to FMB in the form of a supplementary, and we would have to look at it then. They do have some money to help with maintenance. The bottom line is, if there is additional help that is required, such as the roof, then they would come forward to the GNWT.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. 2019-2020 Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, early childhood and school services, not previously authorized, \$2 million. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Education, Culture and Employment, total department, not previously authorized, \$2 million. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.