

Third Session – Forty-Second Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Legislative Affairs

Chairperson
Mr. Andrew Smith
Constituency of Lagimodière

Vol. LXXV No. 8 - 1 p.m., Friday, April 16, 2021

ISSN 1708-668X

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Friday, April 16, 2021

TIME – 1 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Andrew Smith
(Lagimodière)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte
(Seine River)

ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mr. Schuler, Hon. Ms. Squires

Mses. Adams, Morley-Lecomte, Messrs. Sandhu, Smith

APPEARING:

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux, MLA for Tyndall Park

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Mr. Scott Forbes, private citizen

Ms. Rebecca LaRivière, Childcare is Essential

Ms. Anna Levin, private citizen

Mr. Jim Pringle, private citizen

Ms. Rosemary Miguez, private citizen

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 47 – The Early Learning and Child Care Act

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Madam Vice-Chairperson: Good afternoon. Will the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs please come to order.

Our first item of business is the election of a Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam, I would like to nominate Mr. Smith, Lagimodière, as Chair.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Smith, Lagimodière, has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Smith, Lagimodière, would you please take the Chair.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Chairperson: I'd like to inform all in attendance of the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment. A standing committee meeting to consider a bill must not sit past midnight to hear public presentations or to consider clause-by-clause of a bill, except by unanimous consent of the committee.

Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in committee. In accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members. If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they'll be removed from the presenters list.

The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is the signal for Hansard recorders to turn on the mics.

Also, if any presenter has any written materials for distribution to the committee, please send the file by email to the moderator, who will distribute to all committee members.

Thank you for your patience.

Bill 47–The Early Learning and Child Care Act

Mr. Chairperson: We will now proceed with public presentations.

I will now call on Scott Forbes, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Floor Comment: Hello, am I here?

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, Scott, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Scott Forbes (Private Citizen): Good afternoon. Thank you to the standing committee for the opportunity to speak here today on the many issues surrounding Bill 47.

I present to you today as a proud, second-generation early childhood educator and advocate for

the community. I present to you, as you can see, from my place of work, which has graciously offered to support me as I address you here today. I present to you as a father of two children who I desperately want to try and make this world a better place for.

I must admit that I was feeling rather self-conscious yesterday in the wake of all of the incredible speakers that spoke out and made their voices heard on their opinions for Bill 47 last night. I was concerned that I didn't have the same kind of prepared remarks that most of my colleagues and mentors had. But as the evening went on, and as I heard more from the participants, and particularly the question period for the participants and the remarks from the honourable minister in response to presentations, the more it *[inaudible]* qualified to address, which is the notable omissions in the answers provided and the statements provided.

You claim that freezing costs for three years is good for families. What you neglect to mention is that with more profit-driven programs, there will be significant demand on the government to drastically increase fees at the end of that third year.

You claim that public dollars will only be used for regulated and licensed programs. You neglect to mention that once public money enters for-profit coffers, it will be used for the profit of ownership, not the enrichment of the children that they claim to serve.

You claim that you've spent more money than any other government on child care. You neglect to mention that, in reality, you *[inaudible]* money—you're making this money in the form of specialized grants with narrow windows of application and stipulations and that few programs have actually benefited from the money that you've allocated.

You claim that you've wiped out deficits from more than 200 child-care centres. You neglect to mention that these centres have been thrust into deficits by frozen *[inaudible]* centres have heavily relied on for revenue for years.

You claim that you've invested in the workforce with a \$1,200 risk pay during the pandemic. You neglect to mention that your \$1,200 risk pay would not cover the overtime that our community was forced to supply while scrambling to interpret the Province's muddled and often confusing health orders for child-care providers in the early days of the pandemic.

You claim that you're spending a historic \$185 million into child care for Budget 2021. You neglect to mention that early *[inaudible]* wages.

You claim that school-age care will not be left out of regulatory proceedings. You neglect to mention that by denying school-age care the definition of early learning and child care, you open the door for school-age care to be abandoned in the future, relegated to private child-minding programs in a grey market.

You claim that private child care will be required to follow licensing regulations. You neglect to mention that child-care regulations are not equitable to child-care best practices and that, on their own, regulations leave corporations able to interpret them from a for-profit lens rather than a quality lens.

You claim that adding more private spaces will help address the need for families requiring care. You neglect to mention that the majority of private child-care programs that currently exist in Manitoba are having a hard time *[inaudible]* spaces at the moment due to their high cost.

Your principles statement in the language of Bill 47 claims that public funding should promote fiscal responsibility and sustainability of early-learning and child-care services. You neglect to mention that you've spent \$600,000—that we know of—to hire private firm KPMG to write a report whose own parameters limit its data points to the point of wilful negligence.

You claim that lowering the requirements for certification will boost the rapidly declining workforce, which as of 2020 is at its lowest since 2016. You neglect to mention that less training means less qualified individuals who have zero incentive to develop professionally without fair remuneration for their efforts.

* (13:10)

Finally, you claim that your government's actions are in the best interests of children and families of Manitoba. You neglect to mention that this bill will, by opening the doors to big-box, corporate child care, which will inevitably fail in Manitoba, will erode public trust in child care over time. Centres will be forced to close. Parents will be left high and dry.

This government continues to speak in a context of the now, ignoring the concerns raised by its constituents for the future. Your negligence will hurt Manitoba in the long run. But what does that matter in the face of balancing the budget?

This bill is a travesty, but it doesn't have to be. The government's approach to modernization to date has been a train wreck, but it can improve if this

government is willing to put partisan agendas aside and petty schoolyard rivalries aside for the betterment of Manitobans.

The previous government funded an incredibly comprehensive report on the status of early learning and child care in Manitoba, authorized by Kathleen Flanagan and Jane Beach. It included an advisory committee of stakeholders from child care, education and Healthy Child Manitoba. It included legal experts, professional advocates and Indigenous leaders. It included conversations with providers from all across the province, from northern centres, rural centres, urban centres, large child-care facilities to home-based providers to for-profit providers.

And your government's KPMG report did not reference this comprehensive commission once in the close-to-80 pages; half-over half a million dollars to willfully neglect a comprehensive study on the status of early learning and child care in Manitoba.

I implore this government to abandon this iteration of this bill. This bill will undoubtedly lead to pain for parents and children. The data that you need to create a fundamentally robust, quality and accessible child-care system already exists. The experts are already here. We heard from over 25 of them last night who spoke eloquently and passionately and factually about the need for child care in Manitoba.

We have made our voice heard, and I implore you to listen.

Thank you for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have any questions for the presenter?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Thank you very much, Scott, for your presentation today and for your comments.

I did want to just point a few—provide a few points of clarification for your information, and then I have a broader question for you.

When you—you'd referenced our government's approach to creating a more stable child-care sector by ensuring that we have more people in the sector wanting to stay in the sector, and—what our government's attempt to do is to provide more laddering into the sector.

In fact, I heard from my critic, the MLA for Thompson, who I'm sure we're going to hear from in

a moment—and it was really vital feedback that I received from her—about the importance of a workplace training program that has been quite successful up in her community. And I appreciated that feedback from her, looked into it, and I think it's an area where we can certainly enhance upon so that we can be bringing more people into the sector who have day-to-day workplace experience while they're getting their education, have mentors and really ensure that the sector is one in which they want to build their career and stay in for a duration.

So I appreciated that feedback from the MLA for Thompson and I'm certainly—am looking for that type of feedback, in terms of how we can ensure that we've got more people coming in to the sector and working in the sector. But, of course, the qualifications and standards are what they are and they're being maintained.

When we talk about investments, and you had referenced the number and we think that that is \$185 million, which is what budget '21 commits to building a strong child-care sector. We know that that's a good step forward.

We know that when we inherited government, we had an incredibly underfunded child-care sector with a lot of spaces that needed to be created, a lot of spaces on the wait-list. And so we're working through that, ensuring that we've got a good mix of creating new spaces, whether it be for the preschool spaces, infant spaces, which has certainly been an area focus for not just our government but previous governments, and now we certainly need to pivot because we're seeing a shortage in the school-age program and school-age spaces, so certainly wanting to enhance new spaces in school-age.

Now that leads me to another area where you had talked about the fact that the school-age program has—not enshrined—the definition of the school-age program is not enshrined in legislation. We did, for the first time ever, put early-learning programs into legislation. It's a new provision; it was never in the—it's not in the existing act, the one that's 30 years old, The Community Child Care Standards. It was silent on that definition. And we thought it was important to add that definition into the act and not just have it in regulation, and the definition reads: The early-learning program means a program of developmentally appropriate learning experiences for infants and preschool age children that supports their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

So I just found your comments rather perplexing in the sense that the fact that this was always in regulation and the fact that the school-age program definition has always been in regulation for the last 30 years, and now that we've moved to the early-learning program, based on feedback that we've received from community—

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you to the minister.

I just want to remind members here that perhaps we can get to a question for the presenter; that would be much appreciated. Thank you, Minister.

Ms. Squires: So the fact that we have now put that definition into legislation, I'm not sure what unintended consequences or challenges that will create.

So I wanted just a little bit of a clarification on why you see moving the definition—creating the definition of early-learning program for the first time in legislation is a challenge and what those unintended consequences might be.

Mr. Forbes: Thank you for your question, Minister Squires.

I am graduation—I am a graduate of the workplace program, and I do see the value of it in terms of ladder into a career. A ladder that goes nowhere is just a fall waiting to happen. You can't ladder people into a career when there's no incentive for them to reach the top. And when they get to the top, there's nothing for—there's nowhere for them to go but down.

I also [*inaudible*] there's a need for definition in Legislature of early learning in child care. However, respectfully, a person's life in today's day and age can easily last over 80 years. So I would respectfully argue that the first 12 years of a person's life could still be considered early learning in child care.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation. The time for questions has expired.

We will now move on to—

An Honourable Member: I ask for leave to ask the presenter a question.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave for the presenter to ask a question?

An Honourable Member: For me to ask the presenter a question.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave for Ms. Adams to ask a question? [*Agreed*]

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Thank you, and thank you, Mr. Forbes, for your presentation.

I'm just wondering if you could elaborate on how important it is to you that school-age programming be enshrined in legislation, so cannot be changed at the whim of the minister.

Mr. Forbes: Again, I feel as though the definition of early learning and child care, which is what is being proposed to be added to legislature in this bill, must include school-age care, as there is significant research and scientific backing to support the understanding that the first 12 years of a person's life, including the latter half of those 12 years, six to 12, there is significant social development, cognitive and emotional development, as well as physical, fine motor and gross motor development that happens in those stages.

* (13:20)

I would also like to point out that most families do not work the hours of public school, therefore before-and-after-school programs are a necessary cog in the economic wheel that needs to turn, and that those programs should be of a quality that helps enhance children rather than a child-minding service in a grey market.

Mr. Chairperson: The time for questions has expired and I thank the presenter for making a presentation.

I will now call on Rebecca LaRiviere. I ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. And please unmute yourself, turn your video on.

Floor Comment: Hello.

Mr. Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Rebecca LaRiviere (Childcare is Essential): *Michif spoken. Translation unavailable.*

My name is Rebecca LaRiviere. I am Métis from Treaty 1.

It's not lost on me in the past six hours and a little bit that all of these presenters have been female and that the negative—or, many have been female, and the negative effects will be felt greatly on the backs of women and also particularly women who are Black, Indigenous or people of colour.

I haven't heard very much on the topic of how child care is inequitable for people who are racialized. So I'm not sure if that is a priority to this government. We'll see in questions.

I'd like to paint a picture a little bit for you guys. My mom was a single mother, so I was the kid in child care from three months old until I was 12 years old. You know, my home life had ups and downs, but my early childhood educators were some of the most stable, accepting, kind and consistent love that I ever received in my life. And because of the support my mom was able to receive, she was able to pull us out of the cycle of poverty that my family had faced for generations since being displaced from this land. And it's because of the ECEs that I—that was taking care of me that I knew I wanted to be an ECE right from the time I was a child. Wednesday was my 13 years in the field.

The system of training staff in Winnipeg, where I am from, works. I completed the workplace program and I started my job in 2009 in the child-care field, and I was an ECE II by 2012.

In 2016, I had my daughter and, when I went back to work in 2017, I couldn't afford to work to pay for child care, but because of my incredible experiences in child care, I—it was a high priority for me that my child attended child care as well. Yes, so, in 2018, I actually had to quit my job as a trained, passionate, dedicated, early childhood educator because I couldn't afford to send my girl to child care anymore if I continued to work in child care. And, like, the loop of that is so complex.

In 2019, I graduated with my bachelor of arts in developmental studies. I was the first in my family to receive a degree and I would not have been able to attend school without child care and I would not have been able to do better for my child, for my future grandchildren and future generations.

But I'm actually here today as a founding member of the grassroots movement Childcare is Essential. We're a group of parents, ECEs, board members and broader public and allies who are committed to fighting for a publicly available, high-quality, affordable, accessible and equitable child-care system for all children in our province.

Childcare is Essential was created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and against attacks from the Conservative government to deregulate, privatize and avoid adequate funding for a public child-care model. Childcare is Essential has 622 followers on Instagram, 2,600 likes on Facebook, we had over 7,000 views on our town hall and we have over 3,500 signatures on our petition. With our reach, we aim to educate the broader public about the issues we face in our field

and the attacks we face by the Conservative government.

When COVID hit, centres had to close down, but it was really only for about six to eight weeks. And I don't really need to explain to you all why that is. But child care is an essential public service. Everyone needs it.

So the lack of support, protection and communication from the government to ECEs, child-care centres, was obvious. ECEs are front-line workers and they've been the silent faces helping this economy to run throughout the pandemic.

ECEs' value is way higher than what the government is allowing them to be paid. No ECE I know was able to be approved for hazard pay. No centre I know was able to attain the sustainability trust. So those promises are garbage.

What has been really fun about our journey at Childcare is Essential is the predictability and lack of creativity of the Conservative government. We have known for over a year that KPMG was commissioned to do an audit on our funding model, and we can foresee the outcomes of that because of the Australian example, because of what has happened to health care and what has happened to education in our province.

So I question how this government, with an identical market-steward plan for our model, under a very similar colonial, capitalist government as Australia, expects to succeed and do good for children.

What I want to know is what are the step-by-step plans to avoid these proven outcomes, as seen in the classic Australian ABC Learning example, and more importantly, what do you plan to cut next in order to clean up the mess?

I question why Bill 47 doesn't address family needs from low-income households. The North End and Winnipeg Centre are child-care deserts which perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

Child care can address childhood poverty, which Manitoba has the highest rate of. And it can be done with a progressive-pricing or a sliding-scale model. These ideas are not new and they're not super innovative. They already exist. You just need to adopt them. The Conservative government is joking themselves by not getting on board with systems that we already know work.

As an adult working in child care in inner-city Winnipeg, this is where I learned about my culture as a Métis woman and where many children and families

come to engage with our culture as well. Culturally relevant child care plays a role in reconciliation. Culturally relevant child care is written into the TRC, UNDRIP; the ELCC framework exists already. So, amidst the release of a national child-care plan, it seems fascinating to me that the Manitoba Conservative government would be laying the foundations of a regressive system that does not address culturally relevant or widely accessible child care and actually lay out plans that make child care equitable for BIPOC children or employees.

I'm here today to speak truth and to demand that you also speak truth. You have been talking in circles—\$185 million; \$25 million more than ever before; the parent advisory council; the consultation table, where my friends and colleagues did not feel heard; 541 spaces, even though there's plenty that are already running unfunded; something about ECE 1 laddering. I didn't need laddering to do good at my job. I needed to be paid well.

You know, you need to define school-age clearly in this bill, so that amendment needs to be made. And I'm letting you know that your script is moot and you lack creativity. In your question period, don't spend even a second thanking me for my being here or my service or my experience, because your words are nothing without action.

This field is small. We all talk, even amongst members in your own riding, and right now, your words are empty. I need action.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Ms. Squires: So, obviously, a couple of points of clarification and a few points of disagreement.

But one thing I do want to talk about is the importance that we have on culturally relevant child care. And one of the child-care centres that I recently visited in my community were able to put together—put to use some of the capital funding that they received from the department to provide culturally relevant spaces for child care for their communities and to offer culturally relevant programs.

One of the things that our government has also done recently is to cancel—we agree that an Australian model is not the answer, and we were very surprised to see how the NDP had outsourced their Triple-P

Parenting Program, that they bought it from a private entity in Australia to provide them guidance for a parenting curriculum, and that is something that we have done away with because we reject that. And we're looking at our community providers in the community to help us provide culturally relevant programming, curriculum-based activities, whether we're talking about in early learning and child care or in other community providers.

*(13:30)

So, certainly wanted to share that information with the member, and I guess it would be a point of agreement in that we are both in agreement to reject a private-Australian model, whether it be outsourcing and getting the Triple P parenting program or any other programs from them. We are not moving in that direction and reversing some of the directions that were taken by the previous NDP government.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Do we have any other questions for the presenter?

Does the presenter have a response?

Ms. LaRiviere: No, I guess it just—it becomes quite clear that, you know, terms like curriculum-based activities—I'm not really sure what that means—but it's pretty obvious that there's a disconnect from the field. And that would make sense, when you likely haven't used child-care services at all.

So, that's everything. Thank you.

Ms. Adams: Thank you for your presentation and taking the time to speak with us today. Your words are really powerful and your commitment to child care is remarkable. So I do want to thank you for your advocacy on child care.

I'm just wondering what you were hearing from people on the ground, in terms of how the funding freeze for the last five years has impacted the child-care sector? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Just to remind the presenter that I have to call your name before you can speak.

Rebecca, go ahead.

Ms. LaRiviere: I think what's important for me, in talking about the funding freeze, is how this field is primarily run by women and Black, Indigenous and women of colour, and so that funding freeze disproportionately affects those employees.

And, I think that's just what's most important to kind of recognize in that. Those employees working with children who look like them and identify with them are completely invaluable. There isn't even a dollar amount you could pay for what that work is worth, but they do deserve to be compensated well.

And so, with, you know, BIPOC people leaving the field, it makes for young BIPOC children to not have a place to identify, you know, educators that understand their culture and can help them engage with their culture, especially within such a large, urban Indigenous population, a lot of people have been disenfranchised.

But child care is a really ideal place to support language revitalization, involvement with elders and community members. And when centres are compensated appropriately, they can make those things happen because elders don't work for free, unfortunately.

So, just leave it at that.

Mr. Chairperson: I now open the floor up to any members who have questions of the presenter.

Do any members—Ms. Adams, and I believe you have 30 seconds left.

Ms. Adams: I'll be brief.

I was wondering if the—if Rebecca could elaborate on what she envisions for a more culturally appropriate child care. And if I put you on the spot, I apologize.

Ms. LaRiviere: That's fine. I—there are centres that exist that centre Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of raising children, and I think what's important is to engage with those centres, because the ideas exist—a lot of centres are doing them—but it costs money to run and it costs money to make them run with a high quality.

So, yes, I think engaging with those centres that are already doing work, such as Manidoo Gi-Miini-Gonaan, Ka Ni Kanichihk—there's a few centres that are working that way already. So, they're the guys to talk to, for sure.

Mr. Chairperson: Time for questions has expired, and I thank the presenter for presenting.

I now call on Anna Levin, and I ask the moderator to invite them to the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on. Anna, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Anna Levin (Private Citizen): Hi. Good afternoon, everyone. Before I start, I just want to thank everyone on the committee, and especially the other speakers, for the time they have put in last night and this afternoon, providing and listening to comments on this legislation.

I've learned a lot from listening to all of the presentations and I really hope this committee has, too.

My name is Anna Levin, and I'm speaking here not just as a parent and consumer of child care, but also as a concerned citizen who strongly believes in the value of high-quality child care to our society.

I also work in the non-profit sector with low-income families who face a lot of systemic barriers, and so while I'm not here on behalf of my workplace, I can't help but have in mind the experiences of the families I work with when it comes to a topic like this. Knowing how access to high-quality child care can help lift entire families out of poverty, it saddens me to see how impossible that access is for so many of the families that need it most.

I have two main concerns about this bill that I would like to raise. First of all, I'm very concerned that this bill opens the door to more privatization of child care, which has been shown to be likely to negatively affect the sector as a whole. It's not that I believe that any one particular for-profit child-care centre is bad or has bad intentions, it's that we know, thanks to extensive research, that a publicly funded system can more reliably and efficiently deliver high-quality care.

In fact, as we've heard multiple times in the preceding presentations, there is research showing that for-profit care leads to higher parent fees, lower quality care and, oftentimes, even lower paid staff. And we've also heard people speak about how this is true in other fields as well. It's not unique to child care, as a for-profit enterprise will work to do exactly what it's meant to do: earn a profit.

We also know just how important a high-quality child-care system is to a strong economy, a stable society and, most importantly, an equitable society. This committee has now heard over and over again about the meaningful difference that quality child care can make to a family struggling with multiple barriers, not only improving the child's outcomes later in life, but also as an important part of lifting entire families out of the cycle of poverty and oppression that they're caught in. Creating truly equal opportunities for all children is an essential part of this government's duty

to meaningfully address racism and systemic equality in our—systemic inequality in our society.

But it also makes economic sense for a government to invest heavily in high-quality child care. The improved outcomes that result from that impact our society as a whole, lowering costs for public services for these children in the future, meaning that high-quality child care is a public good and therefore should remain as a primarily publicly funded sector.

I know the honourable minister believes in a strong, stable child-care sector, as she has repeatedly said so in her comments to the preceding presenters. It is therefore very confusing to me why her government is not pursuing any of the research-backed, evidence-based approaches to achieving that outcome and has instead contracted with a private consulting firm to produce a report telling them exactly what they want to hear. To me, that does not add up.

Like most of the other presenters who have spoken, I agree with this government that we need more flexibility in our system, and we certainly need more spaces. As a parent who's had to find child care for an infant and watch many peers go through the same, I can tell you that it is not easy.

Parents are going to extreme lengths to get their children into the centres with the highest reputation for quality, centres that have over 500 children on their waiting lists. And trust me, if and when they do get in, they feel as if they've won the lottery. But I think it's also important to consider which parents have the time and resources to go to those extreme lengths and who ends up getting those cherished spots.

And just to reiterate what pretty much all of the 30-plus presenters who have preceded me in this committee have said, high-quality child care is a hundred per cent dependant on being able to attract and retain highly trained staff. And the only way centres can do that is not by offering more career laddering to a job that no one can afford to have, it's by offering those trained professionals a competitive wage that reflects their skills and qualifications, a wage that reflects the utmost importance of the work that they do raising the next generation of Manitobans, a wage that is much, much higher than what these centres are able to pay today.

* (13:40)

We've also heard numerous presenters and even the honourable minister herself speak about how important it is to have this quality of care. It's about so much more than just knowing that you children will

be safe. It's about knowing they'll be lovingly cared for, that they'll build trusting relationships with their caregivers, that they'll be engaged in enriching programs that will contribute to their development.

I can speak from the experience of someone who's had their child in one of those centres where there isn't as high of a ratio of highly trained staff. I personally have observed the difference in quality that that can lead to. And I don't blame the centre for that. I sat on their board and I know they were doing their best to attract and retain quality staff. But when you're caught in the financial position these daycares are in, with frozen parent fees, frozen operating grants and little ability to fundraise because 80 per cent of your families are relying on the subsidy to even afford daycare, what can you do?

And now I'm facing—sorry—and now I'm facing a new challenge as I navigate finding child care for my now preschool-aged child, who will be attending kindergarten in the fall. Trying to piece that puzzle together has been incredibly challenging. And again, I'm conscious of the privileges that I have that allow me to dedicate time and energy to such a frustrating task, the privileges that mean that I might get that desirable spot over someone who simply can't afford to tackle the task.

Regardless of that privilege, in the end it looks like we will not be able to enrol our son in the first choice of the nearby French-immersion school. Due to a lack of spaces in the child-care centres that work with the school, the only before- and after-school care we can find him would require me or my partner to leave our workplace in the middle of the day to transport him from that school to the daycare.

Again, having many peers with children of a similar age, I know our family is not unique in finding ourselves in this situation. I know of many families that have opted out of the enriching learning opportunities offered by our public education system's nursery and kindergarten programs for that same reason, and have even heard of parents who have had to leave their job because they could not find before-and-after-school care for their school-aged children.

I've raised this situation in particular because I believe it's a gap that could be much better addressed by an enhanced public system of preschool- and school-aged child care that works more seamlessly with the school system rather than a patchwork of private daycares.

Happily, what I've also heard over and over throughout this meeting last night and this afternoon is that in Manitoba, we already have a strong, nationally recognized, high quality, publicly funded system that is poised to offer the increased spaces that we need and the very flexibility that this government is calling for. And all that is needed to make that happen is more funding.

The idea that this bill opens the possibility that these non-profit providers could soon be competing with private centres for these desperately needed public funds is therefore very alarming to me. Again I'm left to question why this government, that apparently cares so much about child care in our province, is not pursuing the clear and simple solution to this issue that is being suggested by the sector.

What I would wish we would see in this bill instead is a focus on investing in building more spaces and flexibility in our public system, rather than opening the door to more private options. Our public system is strong and high quality, and with the right investments, there's no reason that it cannot provide the solutions that this government has chosen to look to the private sector to make.

And to that point, the second concern I would just briefly like to raise is that the sector was not meaningfully consulted in the lead up to this bill, and, not surprisingly, this bill is therefore failing to address their very serious concerns.

Throughout this meeting we've heard such great insights and suggestions, so much knowledge from the many representatives of the sector, and it is absolutely essential that this government take these suggestions into account. Who could possibly better guide the modernization of the child-care sector than those who are working in it every day?

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Ms. Squires: Thank you very much, Anna, for being here today and for your presentation and for sharing your personal story and struggle in trying to find, whether it be early learning and child care, or now, as your children are older, finding before-and-after school-aged programming.

And I know that we have many challenges to overcome in building a strong, affordable, accessible

child-care centre-sector for everyone, and certainly am committed to doing that.

One of the other directions that our government has pivoted toward is a commitment to build child care in all new schools. And recently, we announced commitment-capital commitment to building 20 new schools in the province, and each and every one of those schools will have a child-care centre attached to them because we know—like you'd highlighted in your presentation—I don't know too many parents who can leave their jobs in the middle of the afternoon to go and drive their child from after-school into a child-care program. So I really do know that it makes sense to have our child-care centres located in our schools, and we're moving on that as quickly as possible.

And this week's announcement from our Education Minister to build those 20 new schools that will have the child care is going to certainly serve families like yourself in the future and on a go-forward basis for future generations. So really just want to thank you for your presentation. Thank you for highlighting some of those concerns. And thank you for giving some feedback for consideration, here, this evening—or this afternoon.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other questions? Or would the presenter wish to respond to the minister's comments? *[interjection]*

Just to remind the presenter, I have to recognize you before you speak.

Ms. Levin: Oh, sorry. Okay. Yes, I would just—I'm happy to hear that that's happening, but I am concerned about whether there's going to be adequate funding behind those spaces to allow them to be the high quality that parents are looking for. I would love to see those spaces be part of a well-funded public system. That's all. I just hope that's what's happening and that there's more money going into that, so that they can hire staff.

Ms. Adams: Thank you, and thank you to Ms. Levin, for your presentation, and thank you for sharing your story with us.

I'm just wondering if you could elaborate on how important it is to you that there is a publicly funded, quality, regulated after-school program that is enshrined in legislation, so it can't be changed at the whim of the minister.

Ms. Levin: Yes, I mean, it's extremely important, I think. Just because my child is school-age, it doesn't mean that their child care is any less important in their

overall development. They're still putting in a lot of hours at that place, and I would still want them to be in an environment that's going to help them develop and grow and really nurture them. And yes, I think it's incredibly important that that continue to be the way that school-age child care operates.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions?

Ms. Adams: I was just wondering if you could elaborate more on what the funding freeze on child-care centres has meant for you and for your colleagues.

Ms. Levin: Well, I know from the time I served on the board at my son's daycare that it was just getting completely impossible for them to operate. They were looking at all the possible ways they could cut corners to be able to, you know, pay their staff. Like we've heard multiple times, wages are 85 per cent of the centre's budget, so there's just not—there's only so much you can do. And it was just putting them in this really awful position. And so I just saw first-hand how hard that was on them, and it was really distressing to me. Um, yes.

Actually, I would love to know that—what your party would do, given the opportunity to form government; would you commit to universally accessible, highly funded child-care system?

Ms. Adams: May I answer?

Mr. Chairperson: Time for questions has actually expired.

An Honourable Member: The answer is yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Can I just remind Ms. Adams that this presentation is for an opportunity to ask the presenter questions, not the other way around. Thank you.

Since the time has expired for that, I'll call on the next presenter, Norman Rosenbaum, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn the video on.

It's my understanding that he's not here, and we'll drop his name from the list as this is the second time he has been called.

I will now call Kristy Rebenchuk. I ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting and please unmute yourself and turn your video on. It's my understanding that Kristy is not here, and since this is her second chance, she will be dropped from the list.

Now call on Shaina Pauliszyn. Shaina? I understand that Shaina is not here either, and since this is her second opportunity, she'll be dropped from the list.

I will then call on Jenny Da Silva. Understanding Jenny is not here, so, again, this is her second opportunity and she will be dropped from the list.

Zach Fleisher. Understanding that Zach is not here either and this is his second opportunity, he'll be dropped from the list.

I'll call on Jim Pringle and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Pringle, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Jim Pringle (Private Citizen): I would like to thank Mr. Chairperson and the committee members for taking part in this process. I am feeling a little bit like—I listened to many of the presenters last night and to the presenters today, and I feel a little bit like I'm speaking to the choir as far as the presenters are concerned, but nonetheless I'm going to carry on.

The—I have several misgivings about the direction being proposed by the KPMG report—the problems of accessibility, hours of operation, the abandoning of already adequate lunch and after-school—and none of those issues will be addressed if the plan proposed by the KPMG report is adopted.

In fact, if we look at the system as it now operates and at the experience in other provinces, the report will only make an already challenged system worse.

Universal, affordable and reliable child care must be a part of the strategy if Manitoba is to recover from the pandemic in a way which addresses and faces the extra challenges faced by women forced out of the workplace because of school closures and the challenges faced by the underemployed, low-paid and precarious workers.

It cannot be a piecemeal and it cannot be cheap. If this government truly wants to transform the child-care sector and the province as a whole, withdraw from a piecemeal system and its reliance on the private sector to provide this necessary service.

There is a growing consensus that post-pandemic recovery will be impossible without major public spending to make high-quality child care available and affordable for parents. And I would like to mention that there has been mentioned a couple of times of this Quebec model. And I would like to point

out that there are several factors to this Quebec model. And it was initially brought in to be fully accessible. Anybody who wanted to attend could bring their children; it was low cost, and it was also parental-controlled how the centres operate.

What has happened since that initial program was brought in, it was underestimated—the demand was underestimated. They were swamped; these new centres were swamped, were not able to adequately provide what was being planned.

Then, the next government came in and brought in a solution that only made the situation worse. Rather than fully funding what had been initially brought in by the Parti Québécois, they took the same route as which this present government is proposing, of privatizing, and that's how we end up in this situation where in Quebec there's—20 per cent of the centres are privately operated. But that was decisions made by the Liberal government of the time, which has the same viewpoint as this present government in terms of thinking that privatization will solve this problem.

I am speaking to you as a parent and a grandparent with children and grandchildren who have used what has been available. I was a daycare worker in the late '70s, in fact, coincidentally, in the same time period that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was a school teacher. However, I was forced to continue my involvement in—as a daycare worker because of the lack of availability that was faced by my children and their children.

A patchwork of available services will only lead to further failure, exacerbate inequality and limit access to those who need it most.

To focus for a moment on family daycare. Forgive me if I become a little emotional at this point. Although I know two operators—in fact, three—of excellent family-home daycares, I believe they are the exception. No amount of fiddling with fees and licensing regulation and supervision will ensure quality care in these situations. In fact, one of these home daycares made a decision to not accept parents who received the funding—top-up funding, because of their particular economic situation. That meant that those who could afford the centre were welcome at the centre. Those who received government funding to be able to access were not accepted.

Because care was limited, one of my grandchildren went to a family daycare—I—until the day his mother went early to pick him up to find that he was

still in the highchair that he had been put in earlier and also found out that the husband of the provider was the person who was doing the provision of food, which was totally inadequate. What should have been a happy, joyful experience turned into a nightmare—a child left without supervision, left crying, either in the highchair or in the crib. This is totally unacceptable.

And I'm not suggesting that this is totally the case in these kinds of situations. As I say, I know three people who operate these kinds of centres. However, if we are going to rely on privatization, it just opens the door to this kind of situation where the children are not properly cared for. Only leaves of absence from an exemplary employer made it possible for me to care for two other grandchildren from the ages of one to two. Of course, this option is not available in most situations.

First, child care provision cannot be sustained, let alone expanded, improved and made affordable unless governments directly fund the operation of services. As key components of public operational funding schemes, each province and territory needs a system of set or capped parent fees to ensure affordability, together with a provincially required educator wage grid or pay scale that ensures staff wages and compensation, reflecting the value of the work and make it possible for early childhood educators to remain in the field.

Two of my other grandchildren have gone to daycares and lunch and after-school programs where the staff turnover was atrocious. There were situations where staff would just disappear, not even having the opportunity to say goodbye to the children. These are, in their words, situations where the staff were skilled people. The children get used to their skills, their patterns, their idiosyncrasies, and then they're gone. This is unacceptable.

* (14:00)

Although well meaning, the staff were over-worked and underpaid and, understandably, sought other employment. And this would be the same of myself. I was unable to provide for my own children; it was better for me to take factory work than—and to abandon the work that I really loved in the daycares.

Demand-side, public-funding schemes, such as tax credits, cash benefits, parent fee subsidies or other individual parent vouchers, have all contributed to Manitoba's child-care turmoil.

Now, I'm not here to defend the NDP. I realize that the previous NDP governments have made considerable progress in terms of the provision of child care. However, they—that—those governments were also not willing to take the bull by the horns and include early child care and lunch and after-school programs, as well, into a wholly funded, publicly funded, affordable, not-for-profit system.

This turmoil is primarily caused by the lack of funding so that, conversely, substantial government operational funding accompanied by public management of fees and wages is the basis for the success of Quebec's system of not-for-profit, low-fee, directly funded child-care centres.

Mr. Chairperson: I just want to let the presenter know that the time has come to an end. Could you maybe wrap up your comments and we'll go on to the question portion of this presentation. Thank you.

Mr. Pringle: So these are also lessons which we can learn from the stable early-learning and child-care systems in countries like Norway, Sweden, France and Denmark.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

And do members of the committee have a question for the presenter?

Ms. Squires: Thank you very much, Mr. Pringle. It's a pleasure to hear your presentation, and really appreciate your insights into the sector. You've really taken a long view and have got several years of experience that are evident in the quality of your presentation.

We share something in common in that, as a mother of five children, I've used public child care very extensively in my lifetime. And now as a grandparent, I have two children in child care as well and am often honoured to have the responsibility of shuttling my grandkids to and from and ensuring that they get where they need to go. And, really, again, I'm grateful for the sector that is there to respond to the needs for families throughout our entire province.

And I certainly do appreciate your comments on some of the shortcomings and areas of improvement. I echo those areas as well and have seen them, and I experienced them as well in my 35-some-odd years of utilizing the child-care sector and working in there with my family and now recently in this position where I've had an opportunity to consult more broadly and hear from a variety of folks in the sector.

So your voice is certainly appreciated, and I learned some new things, particularly your insight that you shed on the Quebec model and the long view that you've taken to child care. So I'd be more than happy to hear more from you now and potentially at a later date.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Does the presenter have any comments in respect to the minister's comments? *[interjection]* Mr. Pringle, go ahead.

Mr. Pringle: Sorry. I would just hope that the current government take into account the numerous studies that have shown over and over again—and these studies are available; I have found them myself—that show that privatized centres do not provide the care and the quality care that people deserve. They do not increase wages to the level that would keep people involved in the workforce and do not provide the necessary spaces that are—meet the demand that is obviously out there for these services. I really hope that the current government takes a look at, and considers carefully all the presenters that have preceded me—many presentations.

And there, of course, is expertise in our province itself to be able to transform in a positive manner. Transform is a word that can be used in many ways. And I'm really hoping that this government takes it seriously, and transforms this sector in a positive manner.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Do we have any other questions for the presenter?

Ms. Adams: Thank you, Mr. Pringle, for your presentation.

I'm interested to hear your thoughts on—the government gave \$18 million to the chambers of commerce when the centres were facing crisis, and very little was spent. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. Pringle: It was a decision that—it just—it made no sense to me. Why not approach those people currently in the field to be able to distribute this emergency money that—there were emergencies. And I know several, myself included, my own experience where health-care workers were exposed to the virus, and yet the schools were closed. If you're a single parent, what do you do? And the monies were not properly distributed and did not reach those that required the assistance the most.

Mr. Chairperson: The time for questions has concluded. We will move on to the next presentation.

We have Rosemary Miguez. Rosemary? Can I ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting? Please unmute yourself and turn your camera on.

Floor Comment: I'm unmuted and—

Mr. Chairperson: We can't quite see you yet.

Floor Comment: There, how's that?

Mr. Chairperson: Very good. please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Rosemary Miguez (Private Citizen): Okay.

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, Rosemary, you disappeared again. I'm not sure if that's an issue at our end or your end, but I don't see—

Ms. Miguez: It might be my end. I have a brand-new computer here, and I'm trying to work it.

Mr. Chairperson: We can see you now. Please proceed with the presentation.

Ms. Miguez: Okay. I am a grandparent and I'm very supportive of the child care. It takes a community to raise a child, and daycare is a very important part of that community. And there have been many speakers before me who have spoken in-depth, and I really appreciate what they have said, and I understand it.

But right now, I'm just going to touch on the issues that immediately came to my attention. And I'm going to begin with a statement and end with the same thoughts, which is, the future.

All persons in Manitoba benefit greatly from a publicly funded and supported child-care program. Why? Because these children are our future. What is important—what is more important than investing into our future? Government investing into quality child care and education of the child-care workers, teachers, through a universal daycare, ensures equal opportunity for all children.

Oh, dear. I'm just going to get my presentation organized a bit better here.

So, there's a couple of issues that came to me. One of them was the whole idea of people with greater incomes paying for private care. So it seems to me that this system is—what it's going to do is, you have people on one side with the money to pay for private care. And then you have the have-nots on the other side for not-for-profit. It is human nature for us to have these

divisions. It's human nature for us to consciously or unconsciously have this divisiveness.

* (14:10)

And, so, my question is: do we really want to promote divisiveness? And I worry about the private and the not-for-profit that there's a division there, and it's felt. It can be felt.

The freezing of the parent fees. That's a wonderful idea. Of course, making child and youth care accessible is fantastic. What I'm concerned about is the fixed costs that continue to rise and rise.

Let's just start with food, which has substantially increased since the pandemic—and isn't that a little bit awkward. But there's hydro increases; there's rent increases; there's supplies for the daycares—books, paints, paper, educational toys and even computers. All these costs, the—you know, they—all of this costs, and each year it goes up more and more and more. So that is my concern about, again, the costs. Where is the costs going to come from?

Decent wages for child-care workers. This is a career. Being a child-care worker working in daycare before and after school, it's a career and it's essential to have well-educated staff and that their wages need to reflect the work that they do. And when we think about the work that they do, they're responsible for six to eight to nine hours a day, four to five days a week, for the child's social, emotional and cognitive growth. And when you think about that, that is an amazing input into that child. That's lifelong. That's our future. So it's a serious responsibility, the influence that these career workers—women and men—have on our children.

Again, I just feel that well-educated, well publicly supported, funded wages to the staff directly from the government needs to happen. It is so sad when I hear about daycares and daycare workers having to do fundraising. That just—that's not their job. Their job is the emotional, social, cognitive support of our children. Their job is to be that extension of community, that extension of family to raise that child.

Grants and incentives are wonderful, but my understanding with working with grants is there needs to be somebody applying for them and applying for them and applying for them. The main responsibility of the child-care workers, as I've said before, is in that program with those children. So it's got to be very difficult to constantly expect the daycare directors to apply for funding over and over.

The monies, again, should be sustainable through, you know, a sustainable government program—universal child care, which is what I'm talking about—and that the goals and the costs are strong, that they run successful programs for all of these children and use.

And I have to say, I don't understand why governments—and I'm going to put that in plural—continue to spend so much money studying child care when we have examples of successful working universal child care around the world. Sweden, France—I mean, we can name a few. But, you know what's really amazing is within our very own province, we have an expert. We have Dr. Susan Prentice, who could guide us through a—towards a successful transition into a universal daycare. And I really believe that several of the presenters that have already spoken today, you can tell that there's many of them that could be brought together on a committee, and I'm sure that a beautiful, successful movement into universal child care is possible.

So in closing—and I'm working with my computer—I believe that the government in Manitoba—us taxpayers—need to contribute towards a universal child care which provides quality education, good wages for child-care workers and accessible, affordable child care for all who need it. We are investing in our future. The children who are in daycare today will be our future. They're going to be our doctors, our grocery clerks. They're going to be our pharmacists, our maintenance workers, our road constructions, our CEOs and future daycare workers.

And so I think it's really important that we need to think about this.

Something that I've thought about for quite a few years—I did work in child care, by the way, in the '70s, myself. Feels like a long time ago. But something that has always been on my mind—and I'm just going to make sure I've got this right here—is that when we talk about end-to-end care, we have daycare in the beginning and how those children, their experiences in the daycare, which I think is really important. So, they have the experience. And then you move into elder care, and so it's a continuum.

So to me it's how we treat those children in daycare is, when in our turn, us seniors, our turn to need that support at the end of life, it's the experience that they had in daycare that is going to help us go forward. So, if it's been difficult or traumatic or they've lost staff, or they're—or it's not as smooth, or it's not as funded, decently, as it needs to be, well then what's

going to happen when it's their turn to be in charge of this?

You know, we have to think about that end-to-end care. It's—so as daycare is that continuum of elder care, then let's put the money into it. This is our future.

It takes a community. It's the entire community that needs to support a good universal child-care programs. And, come on, Manitoba, let's just step up to the plate. Enough studying. We have our own expertise people here. Let's move that forward. That is what I would like to see.

Thank you for listening, and—to myself as well as others who are well more informed. I tried to read the report, but I wasn't able to just get through the whole thing; I'll admit that. I sincerely hope that that the committee has listened to our words. I sincerely hope that they take everything that we've said into consideration because this is our future. This is all of our future.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do any members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Ms. Squires: Just want to say to our final presenter in this committee, Ms. Miguez, thank you so much for your presentation, your thoughtful words and your insight. And it's evident that you have great passion for this area and I appreciate your—how you closed off your presentation with the phrase, this is our future. And I certainly couldn't agree more.

We have an opportunity to enhance and stabilize our child-care sector, now and well into the future, have it evolve so that families can continue to receive good quality, affordable, accessible child care. And so that is certainly a goal of our government, and we will continue to work towards achieving that goal with our partners in the community.

So thank you very much for your wise words here today. And I appreciate them, thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the presenter have any comments regarding the minister's comments? Rosemary?

Ms. Miguez: Thank you. I just would like to say to the minister, please consider that universal child care. We have expertise here in the province. Please, please take a look at that. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Do you have any other questions? I believe Ms. Adams is next.

Ms. Adams: Thank you, Ms. Miguez, for your presentation and sharing your powerful words with us, and your experiences. I think it's really compelling how much you really care about child care in this province and how important it is.

So I'm just wondering if you could elaborate on how much universal, affordable child care means to you, and what concerns you have in the private sector playing more of a role in child care and early childhood education?

* (14:20)

Ms. Miguez: Well, my concern is divisiveness. Whether we like it or not, our society knows those who have and those who have not. And so, children get out in the schoolyard, they play within—with each other. You really have to think about and consider that, whether we like it or not, they're going to compare; they're going to talk about. It's just human nature.

So, to me, when there's something that's just total equality, just good, basic, everybody is supported in the same way, intermingling of whoever has what, you know, what incomes their families have or not, intermingling, then, to me, that really puts forward equality. And I guess, you know, as a woman, feminist equality is really important to me. And so I guess to answer that question, that's what I feel.

And I think that the universal—like I say, we, all of us—you know, you hear lots of people saying, oh, I don't want to pay into that; I don't want to pay into school taxes; I'm older now, let somebody—no, we all have to pay into what matters right 'til the end because when we all pay in, then there's this beautiful, supported, financial system that supports from end to end. So that's in the daycare as well as in elder care. And we know what's happening in elder care in the private sector, if we want to do that end to end. You know, this pandemic has really opened up quite a few things, a lot of holes.

So I guess that universal support of—from the government, from the taxes, let's just support what needs to be supported.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Are there any questions? I believe Ms. Lamoureux had her hand up.

Oh, I think Ms. Adams gets priority there. Yes, thank you.

Ms. Adams: I would just like Ms. Miguez's thoughts on that the government gave \$18 million to the Chamber of Commerce when centres were in crisis, and I'm just wondering what her thoughts are on that. Instead of the money going to centres that needed it, they gave it to the Chamber of Commerce for a failed program.

Ms. Miguez: Can I just say it's beyond words? I absolutely do not understand at all why that even happened. Yes, there's other more logical methods, and that's—it's beyond words for me.

I just think that was a failure. That was a bad move, bad decision. That's my comment.

Mr. Chairperson: The time for questions has now expired.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Chairperson, I'd like to ask for leave to ask a question to the presenter.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave for Ms. Lamoureux to ask a question of the presenter? *[Agreed]*

Go ahead, Ms. Lamoureux.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Thank you so much for your presentation.

You know, I really appreciate you talking about the reality and all the costs that apply to daycares because we often don't think about all the different components that actually go into the facilities themselves, and these costs do. They continue to rise, and we don't know when that's going to change, especially with the pandemic happening.

So I was wondering if you could paint a bit of picture for the committee. Could you talk to us a little bit about what you think a fully funded child-care sector here in Manitoba would look like?

Ms. Miguez: Well, it would begin with that the staff would be properly trained and that the dollars are there without—yes, of course, you apply to go to university or to school for training, but the money is there for properly funding that the wages are there for the staff, which creates longevity. We've already heard—listened to some of the presentations—the presenters who have been working in daycare for decades. Unbelievable. And some things they had to say were pretty sad about that.

So part of that universal is there's good funding for good education; there's ongoing funding for

decent, proper wages. These women and men are working with the future. They're working with our children. They're guaranteeing our future in a good way.

Daycare directors do not have to spend time applying for grants; that the money that's needed for everyday support of the child care, of the daycare, is just there. Yes, you fill out your forms at the end of the year; yes, you make your projections on what it is that you need, but it's there, and it's available.

I also see that a universal daycare funding properly probably would and should open up many more spaces and make it, you know, more viable. Maybe some of those daycares would be smaller, in little smaller pods, here there and everywhere. But as long as they're all funded equally, then I think that we just would have a more comprehensive way of dealing with—of working with the children.

One of the things I remember, one of the presenters was a teacher, I believe, last evening—I stayed up as long as I could to listen—was a teacher, and talked about children being prepped for school. Again, well-educated, properly funded, properly paid staff can take the time to create programs that can have children child-ready. It's huge. I mean, I probably need my own presentation to write it all down and to work it out.

So, again, we are talking about our future. Let's put money where our mouth is. Let's pay into the future.

Mr. Chairperson: I'll just remind the presenter that we did run out of time, here, a while ago. There was some leave granted for another additional question but I think we'd want to wrap this up as you are the final presenter. Could you wrap that up, please? Thank you so much.

Ms. Miguez: I'm just going to thank everybody—all of you—the whole committee and all the presenters and everyone for taking the time, late into last night and again this afternoon to listen to us. Thank you very much and let's remember the future.

Mr. Chairperson: Well, thank you, and this concludes the list of presenters I have before me.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: We'll now proceed with clause-by-clause of the bill.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 47 have an opening statement?

Ms. Squires: I'm very pleased to have introduced this legislation, which enables the long-overdue transformation and modernization of our early-learning and child-care sector in the province of Manitoba.

This new legislation will modernize Manitoba's child-care system to ensure their options for care are available and that options are available for parents—for families when parents need them. Bill 47 repeals The Community Child Care Standards Act and replaces it with a new regulatory framework that enables greater flexibility for government and the sector to better meet the changing needs of Manitoba's—Manitoba families.

The impact of COVID-19 on the child-care sector and on our society has made the need for change even more abundantly clear, and with many Manitobans poised to return to work as our economy recovers, now is the ideal time to enhance the sector to provide what families need the most. On this point, it is important to restate our government's commitment to not raise parent fees for three years. We know that as parents struggle with the significant impact of COVID-19, and restarting our economy, what they don't need is higher parent fees. Our government has always recognized that parents know best about what their children need. Focussing on the needs of parents is central to our plan to modernize our child-care system.

As we move forward with an increased focus on early-learning services for the first time defined in legislation, I want to thank our early childhood educators and child-care assistants who provide excellent service across the province, and I look forward to working with them to further, as we move this transformative process ahead.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Ms. Adams: This bill makes several changes to child care in Manitoba including opening the door to privatization of child care. The Pallister government erroneously suggested that this bill somehow gives flexibility to do things it currently couldn't do. They suggest that flexibility, including part-time facilities, overnight facilities, or daycare in dance studios are assertions, are nonsense. All of these things were accommodated in the current provisions of The Community Child Care Standards Act. There is nothing novel about the minister's proposal. What is

novel is, however, what is new is that this bill, with the regulations, allows for for-profit centres to get access to public funding.

Bill 47 opens the door for for-profit child care. This is a major mistake. Every study on child care demonstrates that for-profit initiatives lead to worse standards of care and declining quality. The reality—there's really no debate on this. The Pallister government should not be diverting money away from our children for—towards for-profit centres.

* (14:30)

This bill also allows for child-care workers to only do one year of training, rather than the current two years, which investments—this could undertrain staff at some training levels. However, this would mean a decline in training. If the minister decides to lower standards on what counts to train staff and the ratios of numbers of children who they care for, we are concerned; that's a decline of quality.

This bill also guarantees that funding will not be provided to non-profit centres, which is very concerning. While the minister talks about protecting public child care in Manitoba, this bill puts the—our—that public system at risk.

Rather than investing in child care, the Pallister government spent \$600,000 on the KPMG report even as wait-lists increased by 30 per cent since they have taken office. The number of children on the wait-list has skyrocketed from 14,847 in July of 2016 to 18,903 children as of August 2020.

The minister talks about additional spaces, but the fact is the number of spaces created by this government is none. They have just moved the goalpost to include spaces that were not counted before, such as unfunded or private spaces. The small number of spaces that have been created are due to the federal dollars.

The minister—this government and the minister loves taking credit for other people's work. Government has underspent; they spent \$18 million—they gave \$18 million to the chambers of commerce for a failed home daycare program instead of investing in child-care centres at a time of crisis.

KPMG report puts forward many worse—in recommendations. Rather than the government directly investing in child-care spaces, this report recommends the government move towards a business model for child care and become a market steward. There's also recommendations for increasing

parent fees and moving away from the operating grant model.

Their review of nursery school meant that many families and—their parent fees doubled and centres saw their operating funding slashed. That is not what Manitobans want. They want greater—a greater approach to child care and know that their children are going to be well taken care of.

I'd like to thank all the presenters for providing valuable input on Bill 47, and I hope the minister will listen to Manitobans and withdraw this bill and reinvest and make real investments to child care in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and title are postponed until other clauses have been considered in the proper order.

Also, if there is an agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Shall clause 1 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no. All those in favour—the floor is open to questions.

Ms. Adams: Clause 1 of 1: definitions. My question is, the current community standard act defines child care as someone under the age of 12, and child care is to be provided to a child, meaning school-aged children are to receive the same quality as early-learning child care.

Bill 47 defines school-age children but has left them out of the definition of early-learning programming.

Why has the minister not included school-age program in the definitional early-learning programming?

Ms. Squires: So, historically and under the former NDP government, the definitions were always in regulation and we felt that it was important to pull the early-learning program definition, in response to a request from community and other stakeholders, into

The Early Learning and Child Care Act definitions. And so that is why you see it before you under the definitions.

Ms. Adams: Will—no further—no other questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay.

Shall clause 1 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of clause 1, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

An Honourable Member: Mr. Chair, a recorded vote.

Mr. Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested.

For the information of all members of the committee, recorded votes will take place in a similar way in those in the Chamber.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 3, Nays 2.

Mr. Chairperson: Clause 1 is accordingly passed.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Clause 2—pass.

Shall clause 3 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Open—is open for questions.

Ms. Adams: The minister has said part of the reason for this bill is to allow more flexibility.

I was just wondering, what did the minister have to change to allow more flexibility, as in weekend care and overnight care? Was—anything had to be added or changed?

Ms. Squires: So, under the existing act, The Community Child Care Standards Act, there is—it was silent. And that was the way it was, I would point out, under the NDP government.

Under this new act, the purpose—there is a new purpose established and the purpose of this act is to support and regulate the provisions of early-learning and child-care services, to provide financial assistance to or for eligible parents to assist them in obtaining early-learning and child-care services for their children, and to provide funding to ensure the quality and accessibility of early-learning and child-care services.

Ms. Adams: We heard last night from presenters that there were already centres that were able to provide weekend and evening care, so I'm just wondering what needed to be—if that was already being done, why is there being perpetuated that there is not flexibility in the system when there clearly already is?

Ms. Squires: Well, we certainly agree that there's always been the ability to offer flexibility in the system, but it was not enshrined in legislation, and therefore, another section that was excluded under the previous Community Child Care Standards Act, upheld by the former NDP government, there was silence when it came to purpose. I now will—and the principles.

And, of course, now we have enshrined in this new legislation the principles that have—administering this act, regard must be had to the following principles: that early-learning and child-care services should ensure the health, safety, development and well-being of children; access to early-learning and child-care services should enhance the economic opportunities available to parents; early-learning and child-care services should be available on a continuum that is responsive to the diverse needs of families, promoting inclusion and respect, and accommodating diversity should be inherent in the provision of early-learning and child-care services; and that public funding should promote fiscal responsibility and the sustainability of early-learning and child-care services.

So I'm just not sure which aspect of this the member opposite takes issue with, whether or not it's the fact that we have access to early-learning and child-care services, should enhance economic opportunities, that whether or not it should be available on a continuum that is responsive to the diverse needs, or that it shouldn't support inclusion and respect.

Ms. Adams: My question is pertaining around the minister's assertion that this bill was brought in for purpose to make child care more flexible and accessible. And we've heard from presenters last night, yet again, as I've already stated, that there was already the ability to provide evening and weekend care for families.

So, I was just wanting more clarification on what needed to be changed to allow that to happen, when it is already happening in child care.

* (14:40)

Ms. Squires: So, I'm not exactly certain what section of the bill the member is referring to. But again, the principles section that was currently—that is currently before you that enshrines in legislation that early-learning and child-care services should ensure the health and safety, development and well-being of children, that is now enshrined in legislation. It was—the former legislation was silent on that.

So I'm not sure if the member has a specific problem with that. I'd be interested to hear what her dispute on having that enshrined in legislation is, interested in hearing her provide reasoning for why she's not in agreement with the fact that we should enshrine the next sentence in legislation that states access to early-learning and child-care services should enhance the economic opportunities available to parents.

Again, another area that was silent in the legislation that has now been included is that early-learning and child-care services should be available on a continuum that is responsive to the diverse needs of families. I don't know why the member has an issue with that being now enshrined in legislation and why she feels that it was acceptable that the former Community Child Care Standards Act was silent on that and remains silent for the 17 years that her party was in office.

Also not sure why the member is in disagreement with point No. 4, that promoting inclusion and respect and accommodating diversity should be inherent in the early-learning and child-care service. Not sure what the member's challenge with that being enshrined in legislation is, considering the act that she supported was silent on that.

And then finally, I'm not sure why she feels that the statement public funding should promote fiscal responsibility and sustainability of early-learning and child-care services shouldn't be enshrined in legislation. We think that's a good principle to enshrine in

legislation and very pleased to present that modification to this new act.

Ms. Adams: A point of clarification: are we not on clause 3, the purpose of the act?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, we are.

Ms. Adams: Okay, thank you for that clarification. So, while the minister is discussing the principles, I have been discussing the purpose of the act. And I was just wanting clarification on what needed to be changed with the act as the minister has said on multiple occasions that the purpose of this bill was to allow more flexibility in child care. So that was my reasoning for my question.

Thank you.

Ms. Squires: So, I can appreciate that the member doesn't want to hear about the five principles that we're enshrining in legislation that her party had insisted on remaining silent on, and that they failed to enshrine those principles in legislation.

But in regards to the purpose of the act, there again, those three purposes of the act, (a) to support and regulate the provision of early-learning and child-care services. I would point out that the current act, The Community Child Care Standards Act that the member's party had upheld for 17 years, remained absolutely silent on that purpose.

The purpose to provide financial assistance to or for eligible parents to assist them in obtaining early-learning and child-care services for their children. Again, the act, The Community Child Care Standards Act upheld by that member's party for 17 years remained silent on that.

And then the final purpose to provide funding to ensure the quality and accessibility of early-learning and child-care services, once again, under that member's party, the legislation remained silent. We felt that it was a potential strengthening of the act to enshrine that in legislation.

Ms. Adams: Thank you. That answers my questions at this time.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions?

Seeing none, shall clause 3 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of clause 3, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Chair, on division.

Mr. Chairperson: On division.

Clause 3 is accordingly passed, on division.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Clause 4—pass.

Shall clauses 5 through 7 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Clause 5—pass; clause 6—pass.

Shall clause 7 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any questions?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Adams.

Ms. Adams: The current Community Child Care Standards Act include qualifications for child-care centres and classifications. Bill 47 has suggested replacing the word with employees who are certified. Is there—there is a suggestion that certification requirements will be laid out in regulation.

But could the minister please explain on what examples—would be employees who are certified?

Ms. Squires: So, under clause 7, the updated language clarifies that certification is required only when employees provide care and supervision of children. So that's rather self-explanatory, that if you're an employee at a centre and you provide care and supervision of children that the certification is required.

This means that other personnel such as cooks and janitors not providing care and supervision would be exempt from being certified.

Ms. Adams: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of clause 7? [*interjection*] Shall clause 7 pass?

Clause 7—pass; clauses 8 through 12—pass; clauses 13 and 14—pass; clauses 15 through 17—pass; clauses 18 and 19—pass.

Shall clauses 20 and 21 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: Clauses 20—

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: —and 21 are accordingly passed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, sorry. I hear a no.

An Honourable Member: Yes: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Clause 20—pass.

Shall clause 21 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no. Are the—questions?

Ms. Adams: Thank you. My question comes to the duration of the licence—will be renewed for a term specified by the provincial director which must not exceed three years.

I'm concerned that we're going to be having licensing for three years instead of annually, at is—as is current practice.

Ms. Squires: So, under the new provisions of The Early Learning and Child Care Act a licence may be issued for a term specified by the provincial director which must not exceed one year and be renewed for a term specified by the provincial director, which must not exceed three years.

This is newly proclaimed language from Bill 9, which was a bill that was passed—came into force in January that allows for compliance-based licensing which is multi-year and is certainly in accordance with what we have received requests from many of our stakeholder and sector providers to provide.

Ms. Adams: So is it the intent of the minister to allow centres to have three-year licensing approvals?

* (14:50)

Ms. Squires: If they're in good standing, they can have a three-year licensing approval, of course, in accordance with all of our other provisions and they are open to inspections at any time.

Ms. Adams: Will annual inspections be held or will the inspections be very three years, as well? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Minister Squires.

Ms. Squires: Sorry.

Inspections are annual.

Ms. Adams: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions?

Shall clause 21 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, clause 21 is passed, on division.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall clauses 22 through 24 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, I hear a no.

Clause 22—pass.

Shall clause 23 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no. All those in—the floor is open for questions.

Ms. Adams: The current community standards act states specifically that licences must not be transferred.

Could the minister please explain why she is adding the language without prior written consent from the provincial director? In what circumstances would the provincial director allow a licence to be transferred?

Ms. Squires: This allows for exception for transfer of licence with prior written approval. It allows for the continuity of child-care services without a new application or licensing process.

Ms. Adams: In—how would a—what would have a centre need to transfer their licence?

Ms. Squires: This is giving some centres the flexibility that they have asked for and the licence is focused on the facility.

Ms. Adams: So, could the licence be transferred to a new provider at the same location?

Ms. Squires: No.

Ms. Adams: Would a licensed for-profit centre be able to take over a non-profit licence?

Ms. Squires: No.

Ms. Adams: I'm sorry, I'm not hearing the response.

Ms. Squires: No.

Ms. Adams: Thank you. That answers my question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall clause 23 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: On division.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I heard a no.

An Honourable Member: Recorded vote, please.

Mr. Chairperson: A recorded—I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye—of 23, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, in my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

An Honourable Member: A recorded vote, please.

Mr. Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested.

For the information of all members of the committee, recorded votes will take place in a similar way to those in the Chamber.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 3, Nays 2.

Mr. Chairperson: Clause 23 is accordingly passed.

Mr. Chairperson: Clause 24—pass; clause 25—pass.

Shall clauses 26 through 28 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I heard a no.

The floor is now open to questions.

Ms. Adams: This section states that the minister may issue a certificate of prescribed class to an applicant.

Could the minister please explain what type of classes are and what they may be and what their training requirements will be used to obtain?

Ms. Squires: So, under 26.1, where the provincial director may issue a certificate, there's no substantive change between The Community Child Care Standards Act and The Early Learning and Child Care Act.

And, under 26(2), the provisions in the current act is now broken into two different sections in the 20(1) and 20(2) which as stated earlier in that the section clarifies that who can apply for certificate no longer happens—no longer requires every person who works in a child-care facility to be certified.

Ms. Adams: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall clause 27 pass—clause 26, rather.

Clause 26—pass; clause 27—pass; clause 28—pass; clauses 29 and 30—pass; clause 31—pass.

Shall clause 32 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

The floor is open to discussion.

Ms. Adams: How does the minister plan to distribute public grants to non-profit and for-profit centres?

Ms. Squires: So, under part 5, the new provisions provide more flexibility in providing grounds to types of operators that are and it is no longer restricted to centres and child-care homes. The expansion of grant-making powers will support the transformation of child care and allow for more flexible funding approach.

Ms. Adams: Won't this mean current public dollars will be stretched thinner and will go to centres less?

Ms. Squires: So, we recognized when our office—when our government formed office that we have a substantial waiting list for spaces to be funded. We have moved through that backlog and funded nearly 5,000 new spaces since we formed office.

We recognize that that waiting list was far too long when we formed office and has been far too long in years past, and we still have great quality child-care centres waiting for funding on that wait-list and that is why we're moving forward with new funding: 541 new spaces this year. That's 541 new spaces that will be funded—for funding through the financial model, as laid out in the act, and we know that this is just a start. We have more work to do in building a quality, affordable, accessible child-care system.

Ms. Adams: We've heard from many presenters over the last night and this afternoon about how important it is for a publicly funded non-profit child-care sector in Manitoba.

I'm just wondering what the minister's thoughts are on diverting that—those needed dollars to for-profit centres?

Ms. Squires: Certainly appreciate the comments from our presenters who advocate for a strong, quality child-care centre and, of course, a publicly funded child-care centre. And our government couldn't agree more. That is why we are investing \$185 million this year, and that's \$25 million more than any other government has invested in the child-care sector, and we will continue on until we ensure that we've got that strong, affordable, accessible child-care sector for all Manitobans.

Ms. Adams: Yes, but we've heard from presenters last night and this evening how important it is for publicly funded child care, as this bill is enabling for-profit centres to get access to public dollars.

I'm just wondering what the minister's motivations are in this bill to allow for-profit centres to get access to public dollars, when we've heard very clearly from presenters that that is not what Manitobans want.

* (15:00)

Ms. Squires: My motivation, and I would say, the motivation of our government, is to continue creating a strong, publicly funded child-care sector.

Ms. Adams: We have seen with the long-term care what happens when private sector plays a larger—a large role in the care sector.

So I'm just wondering, does the minister have any thoughts about reconsidering allowing for-profit centres to get access to public dollars, because we don't want to see what happened in our long-term care happen to our child-care sector.

Ms. Squires: More or less the same as what I said in my previous answer, that our government believes in and is investing in a strong, quality publicly funded child-care sector.

Ms. Adams: The minister keeps saying publicly funded. However, what is happening with this bill is that our public dollars will go into the private sector, and we've seen what happens with that.

So I wonder if the minister is willing to reconsider this portion of the bill and not allow for-profit centres to receive our public dollars?

Ms. Squires: Again, we have made historic investments in child care, and we will continue to do so and work towards building a flexible, modern child-care sector that is responsive to the needs of Manitoba families.

Ms. Adams: Well, I appreciate that the minister is answering—or trying to answer the question. But, again, it goes back to we've seen what happens when private sectors play a large role in the care sector. So I and many other Manitobans are very concerned about for-profit playing a substantial role in child care.

We've seen other provinces moving away from that model, so why are—why is the minister moving Manitoba towards a model that other provinces and other countries are trying to move away from?

Ms. Squires: Just to correct the member. We're seeing greater utilization of for-profits. And I know the member has—can look to the west at the NDP-led British Columbia government has expanded their utilization of for-profits. I believe they're above 50 per cent for-profit and 50 per cent non-profit. We know that the Quebec model, which is often touted by many as upholding a system that we all should aspire towards, and they have a 20 per cent for-profit ratio versus 80 per cent non-profit. And we know that federally, I believe, it's about 28 per cent of all child-care spaces that are funded are in the for-profit sector—that number has increased over the years—and here in Manitoba we know that we're among the lowest; in fact, we're the second lowest in the country in terms of the number of funded for-profit spaces at 5 per cent, with 95 per cent of our spaces in the non-profit sector.

Our government is not taking an ideological approach to child care. In fact, we're just taking a approach that works, and by that I mean getting—making child care available and creating an affordable, accessible child-care system that is responsive to the needs of Manitoba's diverse needs.

Ms. Adams: We heard from several presenters last night and today that have talked about the Quebec model, and one of—some of the stuff people have said in terms of the Quebec model is it was a mistake by the government to allow for a larger role for private centres in Quebec and that that has caused almost a two-tiered system. I have also looked into the Quebec model, and it has caused—there is almost a two-tiered system, and that has diminished quality in those private centres.

So I'm just wondering, had the minister taken a look at what led to more private spots in Quebec and the subsequent lower standards in for-profit centres in Quebec?

Ms. Squires: The focus of my attention, as well as the department, is to build a strong, affordable accessible child-care sector in the province of Manitoba.

And I would be remiss if I didn't thank all the hard-working members of the team in families who have worked very diligently in helping us achieve our goals in providing greater child-care access to more Manitoba families.

Ms. Adams: So, again I ask: the minister has talked—had touched on Quebec. But we heard from presenters last night that said that one of Quebec's mistakes was allowing more for-profit child-care centres.

What is the minister's thoughts on what those presenters had to say about the failures of the Quebec model, allowing for more for-profit child-care centres?

Ms. Squires: As a proud Manitoban, and as a Manitoba minister of the Crown, I'm focused on building a strong system here in the province of Manitoba.

Ms. Adams: The minister talks about an ideological approach to child-care.

I wonder, what is the minister's thoughts on having a more for-profit child-care in Manitoba. Would that not be more ideological when we've heard from countless presenters last night, and all of the data and research shows that when the profit—for-profit private centres play a role in child-care quality, wages go down?

Ms. Squires: I would argue that it's the member that's talked about an ideological approach to child care.

Ms. Adams: So, what—within this bill, with allowing for-profit centres to play a larger role, what is being planned to ensure that the profits will be—that their profits will be reinvested in the community, like non-profit centres? And we know that when for-profit centres play a large role, that the goal—their goal is the bottom line, and not putting children first.

So what would be—there's nothing in this legislation that protects children and communities from centres—for-profit centres taking the profits and leaving the community?

Ms. Squires: Well, the member talks about a large for-profit sector, and she might be looking, again, as I've recommended earlier, at that British Columbia model that her cousins—her NDP cousins have introduced. Here in Manitoba we have 5 per cent of the licences are in the for-profit sector, and I believe many of those licences were issued under her previous government. So perhaps she could ask some of her former colleagues.

Ms. Adams: Thank you for the comments. Although with the minister being a proud Manitoban and focused on Manitoba, I would ask what the minister's concerns are about having a for-profit centre in—for-profit centres playing a larger role in Manitoba. While I understand the for-profit centres are not a large role in the province now, that is because of the work of the NDP in ensuring that child care was predominantly public, non-profit child care.

So, does the minister have concerns, given the research about what happens when for-profit centres play a larger role in the sector?

Ms. Squires: So I note the choice of words from members opposite, that she says that her government had supported a predominantly non-profit model with some small exceptions, probably around that 5 per cent of the for-profit range. I'm just wondering if the member is advocating that those licences of those 5 per cent of the for-profit centres be revoked that her party had licensed in the first place.

* (15:10)

Ms. Adams: Would the minister commit to ensuring that all public dollars go to public, non-profit day-cares?

Ms. Squires: Certainly didn't get an answer in regards to whether or not that member believes that she should revoke the licences issued to the for-profits that have

had licences for quite some time, some of which were issued, of course, by—to these for-profits by her party.

So I'll just reiterate again that our government is interested in investing in a strong, quality, affordable child-care sector in the province of Manitoba, and we'll continue to do that.

Ms. Adams: I don't think that the licences should be revoked. However I don't think public dollars should be going to for-profit centres when we have seen data and the research that shows for-profit centres have lower quality and lower wages.

So my question then to the minister is: given that we know what happens when the private sector plays a role in child-care—in the child-care sector, and we've seen this play out in other provinces across the country, what is the minister going to do to increase wages for ECEs given that the fund—the grant part of the—part 5 doesn't say anything about increasing grants or how grants will be distributed?

Ms. Squires: I'm certain that it is of great relief to those child-care centres—one of which we heard from last night—and all of the families that they serve, that the NDP is in agreement that they're not going to immediately revoke their licences that were issued; some of those licences issued some time ago, under the previous NDP government.

So it is a comfort to know that the member doesn't believe that those licences should all be revoked. We know that they provide quality child care to the families that they serve, and a very—our government is interested in investing in a strong, quality child-care sector that meets the needs of all Manitobans.

Ms. Adams: No further questions at this time.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing as no further questions, shall clause 32 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of clause 32, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

An Honourable Member: A recorded vote, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested.

For the information of all members of the committee, recorded votes will take place in a similar way to those in the Chamber.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 3, Nays 2.

Mr. Chairperson: Clause 32 is accordingly passed.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Clauses 33 to 35—pass.

Shall clauses 36 and 37 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall clause 36 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no. The floor is open to questions.

Ms. Adams: My question is pertaining to providing financial assistance and other circumstances.

So, from me reading that clause, it's pertaining to the ISP funding. We heard last night from some presenters about how difficult it is to get the ISP funding.

So I'm just wondering if the minister could go into more detail about how they're planning on providing more supports for children with exceptional needs?

Ms. Squires: So, just a point of clarification: is the member on 36(1)? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Adams.

Ms. Adams: I apologize: 36(3).

Ms. Squires: So, the existing act, in fact, was silent on this area. And it was currently in regulation that an application for subsidy may be made on behalf of a child who is 12 years of age and be approved until the conclusion of the school year, in which the child has reached 13 years of age, and that the provincial director may authorize a subsidy or subsidies to be paid on behalf of a child with additional support

needs, or exceptional additional support needs, aged over 13 and not over 18 years.

So, just point out that was in regulation, not in legislation under the former NDP government, the Community Child Care Standards Act that they upheld for 17 years.

On direction from our Legislative Counsel, and after consulting with our many, many stakeholder groups in the province, we're bringing that into legislation for the first time as a new provision under The Early Learning and Child Care Act, that the provincial director may provide financial assistance in accordance with the regulations to or for an eligible parent for the care and supervision of an individual with a disability under the age of 18 years.

And so, I guess my question to the member is why, for 17 years, did her party uphold an act that was silent on provisions to children with disabilities receiving child care?

Ms. Adams: I wonder if the minister can reflect on and give more clarity on what we were hearing last night from families and providers that indicated ISP funding was harder to get?

There's nothing in this bill or legislation that spells out how families can access the ISP funding, and families are probably fairly concerned seeing as they've had a harder time accessing this program and centres are having a harder time meeting the needs of children with exceptional needs with their funding being frozen for the—since 2016, and ISP funding being harder to get.

Ms. Squires: It's just rather unfortunate that the member—and when her party was in power for 17 years, they never thought to enshrine this in legislation. Our government believes that children with disabilities receiving child care should receive financial assistance under the inclusion support program. And we certainly believe that that should be enshrined in legislation.

Ms. Adams: So again, I ask the minister, given that we're seeing more children with exceptional needs and centres are saying they're having difficulties meeting those needs of the children due to the funding freezes by this government, and the barriers to access the ISP funding, I wonder if—what's the minister's thoughts are on expanding the needs for ISP funding in the legislation to ensure children are—get the supports they need?

Ms. Squires: So, of course, I would just, again, point out that this was in regulation prior to this provision coming before this committee right now, and I'm not sure why the member is taking issue with the fact that, for the first time our government has introduced legislative reform that would enshrine this in legislation, as opposed to in regulation, where, as the member has pointed out, could have been changed at the stroke of a pen by any minister and, here it is, bringing this into legislation to ensure that the stability and the provision of that service.

Ms. Adams: We did hear from many parents and providers last night about the inability to access ISP funding which they are greatly needed. Enshrining it in legislation is one thing, but there is nothing to indicate how families can access that funding, and with the barriers families are seeing now, what is the minister going to do to support families when it is not spelled out in the legislation on how families are going to be able to access the money?

Ms. Squires: So again, the purpose of an act enshrining something in legislation is to ensure that the principle of that is adhered to and placed in legislation. So that is what we've done. And I'm not sure why the member, when her party was in power for 17 years, never thought to put this in legislation. Our government is putting it in legislation as well as continuing to support children through the inclusion support program.

* (15:20)

We thought—we think it's important that it is brought into legislation from the regulations.

Ms. Adams: I'm now going to quote the—36(3): the provincial director may provide financial assistance in accordance with regulations. So, it—the outline of how the ISP funding is within regulations, which can be changed.

So, with the minister saying that they're bringing it from regulation to legislation, there is nothing that spells out, protects—or does anything to protect children with ISP funding. And I am concerned that, because we are not protecting ISP funding—we heard last night from presenters about the barriers to accessing the ISP funding.

So, given those needs by both families and centres, would it not make sense to ensure that the families are able to access the necessary funding in legislation?

Ms. Squires: So that is an excellent point in that this legislation—this legislative reform would ensure the applicability to an individual under the age of 18 who has a disability. So that is key.

We think that it is important to ensure that individuals with a disability under the age of 18 are applicable and that that concept is enshrined in legislation.

Ms. Adams: Yes, however it is being done through regulations, which can change.

So given that families are saying that they're having a harder time accessing the ISP funding needed, do we not need to protect that funding in legislation and not allow regulations to do it, whereas this government has done—they've made it harder for families to access the funding needed?

Ms. Squires: So, again, we put the concept in legislation and then we put other applicable information such as tables et cetera in the regulation.

Again, we think that it's important that the applicability for an individual with a disability under the age of 18 to receive these benefits be enshrined in legislation. I don't know what—the member opposite has a problem with that.

Ms. Adams: I am very—I was very concerned to hear a number of families—and we've known this for a number of years—that have said they've had difficulty accessing the ISP funding.

So I wonder what the minister's thoughts are on the families that are having—and centres that are having difficulties accessing the ISP funding and how the minister is going to help those families access the services they need, seeing as this section does not address the needs that those families expressed last night and today.

Ms. Squires: So, I appreciate the member's question.

And, once again, we are putting this in legislation, moving it from regulation, where it was housed under the NDP government, enshrining that in legislation and, of course, are continuing to serve children, all families that are eligible that apply for inclusion support program assistance is brought into the program. And our expenditures have risen year over year from when the former NDP government was in office. And we'll continue to support families and children with disabilities. We think that that's important, and we'll continue to do so.

We know that there's more work to be done in that area and we'll—we're committed to doing that so that all families—and specifically all children with disabilities—who require supports receive the supports that they deserve.

Ms. Adams: Was the minister aware of the difficulties families were having accessing the ISP funding? We heard several people last night and today express difficulties accessing the ISP funding. And how does the minister feel this legislation will address those needs if they're not being already addressed?

Ms. Squires: So, again, I appreciate the feedback from all the presenters. I also appreciate the feedback from the 4,500 Manitobans that we heard from in our EngageMB survey as well as the voices from other formats, including the ministerial consultation table.

And again, really appreciate the perspectives of all of our presenters who came out last night and this afternoon, and again, we do believe that it is important to support individuals under the age of 18 with a disability through the provision of providing financial assistance and other circumstances, and then enshrining that principle in legislation.

I'm not sure why the member's party never felt that it was important enough to enshrine in legislation and not sure why she's not willing to support this right now.

Ms. Adams: I was very troubled and concerned to hear about the family stories of having difficulties accessing the ISP funding.

And I'm wondering, what is the minister's thoughts on that?

Ms. Squires: I'm very concerned as to why the member opposite doesn't want to see this provision brought into legislation.

Ms. Adams: No further questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall clause 36 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: No? Okay.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of the clause 36, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Clause 36 is accordingly passed.

* * *

Clause 37—pass; clauses 38 and 39—pass; clauses 40 and 41—pass; clause 42—pass; clause 43—pass; clause 44—pass; clauses 45 and 46—pass; clause 47—pass; clauses 48 and 49—pass; clause 50—pass; clause 51—pass; clause 52—pass; clauses 53 through 55—pass; clauses 56 and 57—pass; clauses 58 and 59—pass; clause 60—pass; clauses 61 and 62—pass; clauses 63 and 64—pass; clauses 65 and 66—pass; clause 67—pass; clauses 68 through 70—pass; clauses 71 through 73—pass; clauses 74 and 75—pass; clauses 76 and 77—pass; clauses 78 and 79—pass; clauses 80 through 82—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

The hour being 3:30, committee rise—*[interjection]* What's the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 3:30 p.m.

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