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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 16 May 2001

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 16 mai 2001

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Chair: James J. Bradley
Clerk: Donna Bryce

Président : James J. Bradley
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX**

Wednesday 16 May 2001

Mercredi 16 mai 2001

The committee met at 1003 in room 151.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Mr James J. Bradley): I think we've got a sufficient number of members now to begin our committee. I want to thank the Vice-Chair for his fine work last week.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I've learned from someone I admire.

The Chair: The first item before us is the report of the subcommittee on committee business dated Thursday, May 10, 2001.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I move its adoption.

The Chair: All in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

Mr Wood: Mr Chair, before we get totally off that item, I'd like to draw to the attention of the committee that we have some 18 designations and we are not likely, at the rate of one every half-hour, to get through all those in the time period allocated. I don't mind extending for a week because we are not going to sit during constituency week. We may have to reduce the amount of time if we are going to get through all those designations within the time period allocated.

The Chair: That is one option, certainly. Another option is that the committee would sit in the intersession, presuming the House is not sitting itself in July and August.

Mr Wood: I would point out to the Chair and to the committee that we are not prepared to give indefinite extensions to the time required to do these designations. We're prepared to extend for a week because of constituency week. We are not prepared to give further extensions.

The Chair: Any comments?

Mr Crozier: I'm a bit disappointed the suggestion would be given to have less time to interview these intended appointees. If this system is truly going to be accountable, I think we should be given that opportunity. Anything less than a half-hour—it ends up being 10 minutes per caucus. That's not a lot of time. If these appointments are treated seriously, and we think they are and we think the government members should think that way as well, to lessen the time takes away from the importance of this whole process.

We're paid to do this job whether we sit in the intersession or not. We like to tell people that we work at this job 365 days a year. Let's indicate in fact that we do that. The most important point I want to make is that we should have the opportunity to interview the intended appointees we choose.

Mr Wood: The rules, quite rightly, don't restrict any of the parties in terms of the number of designations. They do, however, restrict the time available in which these people can be reviewed. I'm drawing to the attention of the committee that with the number of designations it is not going to be possible, within the time allocated, to get through the number of designations unless we reduce the amount of time.

I'm entirely in the hands of the other two parties as to how many they want to designate. If they're going to make a large number of designations, they have to recognize that we can't get through all of them unless we reduce the time allocated. I'm quite in the hands of the committee whether they want to reduce the time or not. I'm really drawing to the attention of the committee that we have a problem.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Instead of reducing the time, would it be possible to begin the sessions earlier?

Mr Wood: No.

Mr Crozier: Why not? Just because you don't want to?

Mr Wood: The standing orders give us I think totally ample time, which is two hours a week, to deal with these. If there are a larger number of designations, they permit the committee to reduce the amount of time allocated. It's up to the committee as a whole. I'm quite happy to do a large number of interviews, but we are going to have to reduce the time if we are going to have a large number of designations.

Mr Crozier: I would think there's some way the committee could look at extending the time, notwithstanding what the standing orders say. Do we ask permission of House leaders, which we are not likely to get from the government House leader? Do we decide that we sit longer as Ms Dombrowsky has suggested? Can we sit more often? I just see it, from what Mr Wood is saying, as a veiled threat, saying, "You guys are choosing too many and you'd better be careful or we won't get to see all of them." This committee should have every opportunity. I'm sorry the committee can't interview every intended appointee.

Mr Wood: That's up to the opposition.

The Chair: Does any other member of the committee have any remarks in this regard? This is a matter that perhaps the subcommittee will be dealing with, because it does present a challenge for us, for the committee to be able to deal as committee members see fit with the intended appointees of the government. As I say, probably the subcommittee, the steering committee, would be able to perhaps resolve this.

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INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

JOHN ARNOTT

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: John Arnott, intended appointee as member, Early Years Steering Committee of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

The Chair: Our first appointment this morning is Mr John Arnott, intended appointee as member, the Early Years Steering Committee of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

Mr Arnott, as you may be aware, sir, you are permitted to provide an initial statement, and then each political party has up to 10 minutes to direct questions to you. Welcome to the committee.

Dr John Arnott: Good morning, Mr Chair, MPPs, honourable members, and ladies and gentlemen. To make a very brief opening statement, just to give you a brief background of my background, my education background is I have a BA from the University of Toronto and a doctorate in dental surgery from the University of Toronto in 1969. My community service and volunteer activities have been of fair scope since I started in practice in 1969.

Specifically, as they relate to children's services and children's activities, I was a core member of the school committee for the French immersion program which was initiated in Leeds and Grenville in 1988. I was involved with that from 1988 to 1993. This involved the inception and development of this program at the elementary and secondary levels in Leeds and Grenville.

I was a member of the children's services advisory group of Leeds and Grenville on the committee for children and family services integration, which was a formative initiative that involved all the stakeholders in the tri-county area, with representation from Kingston and Frontenac. Its creation would have led to the model for this type of integration for the province for children's services. It was focused on primarily single-point entry for children and families and universal accessibility, universal availability, and affordability for all those in need. It was an MCSS ministry pilot project that was intended to bring child welfare in at the end; ie CAS. In my role in the children's aid society at that time, I felt that this was not really appropriate as child welfare really had at that point in time a great deal to learn and a great deal to contribute productively to the process and therefore to

be participating at the very beginning, being such a large player.

My board of director experience has run the gamut from the Brockville heart foundation, which is part of the Ontario heart foundation, from 1970 to 1972, to the Brockville Montessori School, where I was the founding chairman of the board in 1976 and then continued as a member of the board and as chairman for several years until 1989.

I was a member of the city of Brockville museum board of management from 1988 until the present and chairman of that board from 1990 to 1992 and from 1994 to the year 2000.

I was a member of the children's aid society of Brockville and the united counties of Leeds and Grenville from 1972 to 1993; chairman of that board in 1976-77, 1984-86 and 1991-94.

I was on the founding board of the unified child and family services agency of Leeds and Grenville as a board member from 1994 to 1995. I was asked to submit my name for consideration as a board member in that agency, given my lengthy and in-depth experience in community child welfare and other children's issues and services that I've mentioned already.

I was a member of the Rideau Valley District Health Council from June 1996 until its closure and transformation in 1997. I've been a member of the South-eastern Ontario District Health Council from 1998 until the present date. I requested to join these two agencies due to a keen interest in preparing for the escalating demand for health care services that is just now beginning to accelerate. Adaptations to this increasing demand and making improvements in service delivery are a challenge to communities to ensure that they reflect the needs in their communities and that they build in the flexibility and quick response mechanisms to adapt to an ever-changing composition in their populations.

The same old, same old approaches to those services and to children's services just don't work in today's flexible and mobile environment. This early years initiative is a vital part of that process, as one of the major bonuses of a healthy, strong beginning is a healthy lifestyle and a capacity for healthy choices. We owe that to our future generations.

It has always been my policy to think globally on these issues and to participate and act locally as enthusiastically as possible. If we can make changes in what is currently the norm, those changes are really easily sustainable. The difficult challenge is to actually make the changes. A good example is immunization, measles. Measles used to be considered just a consequence of childhood. Now, if there's a case of measles, it is front-page news.

To sum up, really, my position, I'll just read one small passage which I think is critical in the context of the early years initiative, and that is: "Children ensure a society goes on and the quality of that society. Societies and governments" and communities "have an obligation to the future to devise systems that ensure effective

parenting,” systems that “support good early child development,” and systems that “take into account socio-economic factors associated with a changing economy and the increasing participation of women in the labour force.”

My credo has always been, rather than to simply look at things that are and ask why, to perhaps look at things that might be and ask, why not?

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. We will start our questioning with the official opposition.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Good morning, Dr Arnott. Thank you very much for coming this morning to share a little bit of your understanding of your role as a member of the Early Years Steering Committee and what that will involve. You are familiar of course with the Challenge Fund initiative, which basically gave birth to the Early Years Steering Committees within communities.

I was wondering if you could just share a little bit of your understanding of your role, the kinds of programs that you would be considering and encouraging to be established or supported within your community.

Dr Arnott: The first challenge, I think, of an Early Years Steering Committee in any area in the province is going to be to, first of all, get an accurate inventory of the services and the resources that are there, to find out specifically where they're targeted now. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the unified agency approach, which is really what an Early Years Steering Committee is, is pulling all these separate entities together at the moment, finding out how they're targeted, and ensuring that the targeting is perhaps more universal, more easily accessible, and also responding to the real education challenge that's there, which is to make it very acceptable and very attractive for parents and parent substitutes to ensure that they would willingly access what is available and what is being offered.

We have perhaps a perception now that the services that are out there are targeted specifically at disadvantaged and underprivileged and poor—

Mrs Dombrowsky: Who would have that opinion?

Dr Arnott: I think that's the general opinion of the population, that those services are targeted at families and children in need specifically and others don't need to be concerned with accessing their services. Whereas I think that expertise that's there—if you look at the early years challenge for our community and for every community, I think there's an opportunity to take advantage of perhaps elements that we take for granted and assume are present for young children, when in fact I think the data show specifically that those things aren't in a lot of cases. Yet we perhaps assume that they are.

I think the first step is to take an inventory and the second step is to ensure that there is a ready acceptance in the community for innovation, for whatever, in ensuring those programs are there.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Are you familiar with the \$114-million transfer from the federal government?

Dr Arnott: Yes, I've heard about that. I understand that it is occurring or has occurred.

Mrs Dombrowsky: It has occurred.

Dr Arnott: Has the money arrived?

Mrs Dombrowsky: The money was in the bank April 1, from the federal government. Are you aware that, previous to that transfer, there was \$30 million set aside for the challenge fund that was designated to support the early years initiative within the community? Are you aware, at least from what we've been able to gather with the information that has been presented publicly, that now that challenge fund will be supported with federal dollars and not provincial dollars?

Dr Arnott: I'm not aware of that, no.

Mrs Dombrowsky: You're not aware of that?

Dr Arnott: No, not specifically. From our community perspective, we haven't really reached the stage where we would be investigating the source of the other components apart from the—

Mrs Dombrowsky: I think it is very important information for you to have.

Dr Arnott: That will certainly be made available, and we'll be made well aware of it, I'm sure.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I'm very pleased to hear you make some statements about the importance you place on good early child development. You did make some reference to the new reality of the participation of women in the labour force. Maybe you could comment a little bit about the impact of that new reality, of the increase in the participation in the labour force. What do you see that has created in terms of need and demand within your community?

Dr Arnott: In our community we're probably pretty typical of most of the communities in Ontario. Children are children really, no matter where you go. In the context from the perspective of women, I think women's capacities, and parents' capacities, are stretched to the limit. My experience is that they all want to provide for their children a parenting environment and an environment in which their children can grow, develop and flourish.

Increasingly I think an awful lot of parents are very hard pressed. This initiative is an excellent opportunity for communities to identify within their own geographic areas, and they're really best suited to identify what those needs are, what supports parents and their families currently need regardless of what the socio-economic spectrum is and where that's shown to be not really that relevant a factor.

The importance of this program is to ensure that those supports are—as I was saying, they're currently perhaps more universally targeted than they should be, so I think the opportunity is there to provide support for single parents, whether it be male or female, and parents as a couple.

1020

Mrs Dombrowsky: Would you agree that the increase in the participation of women in the workforce has increased the need for quality child care within communities?

Dr Arnott: Given what's reported in the Early Years Study, I would say that probably there's a need for assistance there. I don't see how that additional workload for parents, both male and female, and the economic stresses have been an advantage. I don't see that as an advantage for children; otherwise I think we'd be seeing perhaps something different in children's growth and development than we're seeing at present. I think that probably addresses your question.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Just for clarification, are you suggesting then that there is a need for quality daycare?

Dr Arnott: Any kind of daycare should be quality daycare, whether it's provided by parents themselves, by mothers and fathers, by parents on-site, or whether it's off-site, outside what we have been accustomed to knowing as the nuclear family unit.

Yes, daycare of any kind should be quality daycare. That should be the objective. In individual communities, given the population of children and what the economic experience of the community is at that time, communities are in the best position to identify the resources that are there to suggest an enhancement or a differentiation of those resources, and to bring that forward through a mechanism like this to access the paired funding. Communities perhaps have a great deal of expertise in determining the most effective targeting of those resources. The challenge of course is going to be to convince community members that these are investment dollars in their future and that therefore there is an enhancement that that represents. So improved quality daycare should be the objective across the board.

Mrs Dombrowsky: That's interesting, because of the \$114 million that came from the federal government—this is new money the province didn't have before—not one red cent has been designated for daycare. Clearly the federal government, when it put aside this money—

Dr Arnott: Perhaps not yet, but I think that if there are initiatives that come forward from communities, it would address that.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Actually the minister was asked about it by daycare advocates. The minister indicated the government had to make some difficult choices, and their choice was that daycare would not be supported.

Dr Arnott: At present that might well be the case. As the steering committees are in place and do their work, if there's an identification in several areas that daycare enrichment and enhancement is an excellent vehicle whereby the growth and development of children can be improved, then I think there's an opportunity there to address funding in that direction and have it targeted by those community groups that are really best suited to identify where that money or those funds are best expended.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Dr Arnott, I am so encouraged to understand that would be your position with regard to providing quality daycare within communities. I am somewhat encouraged that in your role as a member of the steering committee, you might be prepared to further that cause within your community.

Dr Arnott: I don't think you can assume that daycare is the only option or is the best option. You have to consider what is the best option.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Yes, but right now it's not an option. With \$114 million that has been transferred, not a cent of it has been directed to support regulated daycare, even though the government cut regulated spaces by 15%.

Dr Arnott: Of course daycare is really contingent upon the level of expertise of the caregivers. We have a dearth of early childhood educators at the moment and early childhood educators have been shown—

Mrs Dombrowsky: Because they're not paid enough.

Dr Arnott: —to be very competent individuals. This has to be part of a several-pronged approach, not just simply the expenditure of dollars tossed in one direction or the other.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Not a lot tossed there.

Dr Arnott: That is why the early years initiative is an excellent example of how communities can fashion these instruments for their own benefit, and we respect their wisdom.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Good morning. I note in your resumé your involvement and membership in the Progressive Conservative association and the executive capacities you served in.

The concern we have in our caucus with this whole new organization that is being set up to give leadership in the area of early childhood is that the government is simply setting up a structure to support its initiatives and to move its agenda forward. Not that a government doesn't have the right to move its agenda forward, but it seems to me that if that agenda is not working out for a significant number of children in the province, then we have some difficulties.

I was heartened by what you said in your opening comments, that you are open to seeing what is out there and having seen it—

Dr Arnott: Absolutely necessary.

Mr Martin: —and in discussion with other members of the board to make the correct recommendations to try to resolve those issues.

From my own personal perspective and some of the work I've been doing over the last couple of months on the issue of poverty, particularly child poverty, and the fact that—this information was given to us by the very excellent legislative research we have here at Queen's Park. To suggest that this government early on in its mandate—as a matter of fact, it wasn't even in power a couple of months when it reduced social assistance rates by 21%, and it did away with rent protection by the Tenant Protection Act with basically what they call “vacancy control.”

These initiatives, coupled with the withdrawal by both the federal and provincial governments from social housing construction, have been heavily criticized by social activists and child care advocates who argue that the cuts have increased poverty in Ontario, as well as the numbers of people of living in marginal housing or in hostels.

Then the Early Years Study, which you quoted, and I'm going to give you another quote here, goes on to say:

"A family who does not have a place to live is not going to be able to provide a stable home environment for the children. This message was reinforced by provincial children's services organizations who spoke of their member agencies seeing more children who are going hungry, children who have been taken into care of children's aid because the family is homeless, more family stress and more mothers with children in shelters for the victims of family violence."

In the work I've been doing over this last short while, what we're told is that in the Toronto area, which is the economic hub or the industrial heartland of this province, we now have one in three children living in poverty. This is Campaign 2000, an organization that was set up to keep the feet of the federal government to the fire.

I've become aware of another piece of interesting political activity where the federal government, having decided it needed to take action on a commitment it made to reduce child poverty by the year 2000, introduced a supplement to the national child tax benefit that would go to all low-income families. That benefit, that supplement, is being clawed back from anybody in this province on assistance, whether that be Ontario Works or the ODSP.

1030

Dr Arnott: Where did the money go?

Mr Martin: Pardon?

Dr Arnott: Where did the clawback go?

Mr Martin: Well, 20% of it is staying in municipalities to provide for programs of a general nature, mostly available to families who've been able to find work and support themselves in that way; 80% is going back to the province. Some of that money is going into a child care program and some of it is going into general revenue, which supports whatever the government does, in my view.

Dr Arnott: So the bulk of it has been retargeted.

Mr Martin: But it is money that's taken out of the pockets of poor children.

Dr Arnott: To put back in; the majority of it is being put back in.

Mr Martin: But taken away from the majority—

Dr Arnott: Yes, but the majority is being put back in. That's the important thing.

Mr Martin: Yes, in a way that doesn't necessarily assist those families from whom it has been taken. You're taking money from poor children to give back to poor children. Does that make sense to you?

Dr Arnott: It's not just specifically taken from poor children to give back to poor children.

Mr Martin: It is. It's specifically taken from the most vulnerable and marginalized of our children to be given back to poor children. Is that good government policy?

Dr Arnott: If I understand what you're saying, it's a question of it being regionalized if you like; in other words, given back to people who are closer to the people who require the assistance and therefore probably I would think would be in a much better position to decide

how those funds should best be distributed in their own communities.

Mr Martin: What you're saying then is it's better for government to put in place programs for poor families than to leave it to poor families themselves to decide how to spend that money on behalf of their children?

Dr Arnott: No. I think the people who are closer to the people in need are probably in the best position to determine, in consultation obviously with the individuals in need, how those funds would be distributed.

Mr Martin: My view is—

Dr Arnott: I think it's more accurate targeting and finer targeting in our own community, for instance, to bring it to the local level. I think the individuals who live in our community and the leaders in our community certainly have an accurate sense of responsibility and an accurate sense of vision to know where the funds are most needed and, with the consultation in their own community, would perhaps produce a more effective distribution of those funds than from funds that are simply centrally administered by way of the cheque and assuming that every individual knows exactly how to spend that. That's really what those supports and resources are for in communities.

The Early Years Steering Committee's objective is to bring those needs and those resources together and propose means and plans and programs whereby there can be an enhancement of the effect of the dollars that are available for distribution in the community and that the communities contribute from within their own resources matching funds, which means they have an investment in those early years potentials rather than simply contributing to what amounts to remedial funds down the road to try and address situations that perhaps could have been prevented or certainly moderated considerably if the intervention and the assistance had been available earlier and more broadly distributed and targeted.

Mr Martin: In other words, in your view, it is OK to take money from the parents of children who are obviously closer to the circumstance than anybody could possibly be and break with a tradition in this province which says that parents should be the first and primary caregivers for children and turn it over to the state so that the state in fact can then decide what their priorities are. This sounds like Russia and communism all over again. I have no more questions, but I have certainly made up my mind on this candidate.

Dr Arnott: I think this is giving people in communities the opportunity to make the best judgment of what their communities need and what their communities want.

The Chair: Thank you very much. The government caucus?

Mr Wood: We will waive our time.

The Chair: The government caucus has indicated it will waive its time. So we have completed this particular matter.

SCOTT POST

Review of intended appointment, selected by the official opposition party: Scott Post, intended appointee as member, Early Years Steering Committee of the Chatham-Kent Health Unit.

The Chair: The next individual to be considered is an intended appointee as member the Early Years Steering Committee of the Chatham-Kent Health Unit. Mr Post, welcome to the committee. You have an opportunity to make an initial statement should you deem that appropriate.

Mr Scott Post: I do. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to sit before you today to discuss my intended appointment to the Early Years Steering Committee. I was honoured when one of the members of my church community asked if I would apply for this position, and I'm thrilled that you are considering my application and are willing to spend some time with me this morning.

Very briefly I'd like to share with you a bit about who I am, why I've applied to this position and what I believe I can offer the Early Years Steering Committee as well as my community.

I'm a recent member of the Chatham-Kent community, having moved to Chatham with my wife Melita only about eight months ago. In January of this year our first child, a son whose name is Matthias, was born to us and together we form the Post family of Chatham. I work at a local church as the director of youth ministries and my wife works at home caring for our son and taking care of the family businesses.

Originally I am from the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia, but I moved to Ontario to attend university in Ancaster at Redeemer University College, from which I received my bachelor of arts in religion and theology.

There are a couple of reasons why I am applying for this position. First, I believe that serving my community with my gifts and my talents is important for the development and upbuilding of the community itself, as well as extremely rewarding for myself. Second, and more specifically, why I've chosen this committee is because I have a passion for children. I believe in children, not only their future but also in their present situation. The work of the Early Years Steering Committee will have a significant and positive impact on the lives of many children as it works to improve in the area of early childhood development. I would be honoured to share in the work of just such a committee.

I also believe I have the skills and experience which would benefit the early years committee. I've held a number of paid and volunteer positions in which I have worked with and on behalf of children. I've also been involved in various church and school committees relating to youth education and volunteers.

I have a co-operative spirit and I'm team-oriented. I'm approachable and like working with people. I will be able to provide the committee with my time, energy and enthusiasm as well as a unique perspective being a new

and young parent and a member of the Christian community.

If there are any questions regarding my intended appointment to the Early Years Steering Committee, I would be pleased to answer them to the best of my ability.

The Chair: Thank you. We begin in this case with the third party.

Mr Martin: Have you any political affiliations?

Mr Post: I do not.

Mr Martin: How did you hear about this position?

Mr Post: As I said, it was mentioned to me by a member of my church community who approached me and asked if I would apply to the position.

Mr Martin: As far as you know, is this person connected politically in any way?

Mr Post: Not that I know of, but I'm uncertain.

Mr Martin: Our concern, as you may have heard in previous questioning of the candidate before you, is that this is simply a shell by this government to actually impose its agenda on people where child development is concerned. My concern is that this government is moving, and has from its inception, aggressively to remove any responsibility and control over resources spent and activity organized from the parents of children and to turn it over to the control of this government which then just believes it knows what's good for everybody. In many ways, this is really hurting families, particularly poor families and poor children.

A government that is sitting on over \$900 million from the federal government to be spent on early childhood programs, of which nothing has been spent yet, a government that has \$1 billion in reserve now and announced last week that it is going to spend another \$4.2 billion to give tax breaks to corporations, can't find money to increase the income of some of our poorest families on assistance and, in fact, is clawing back \$100 a month on average from poor families given to them by the federal government under the aegis of the national child tax benefit supplement.

I would want to know, before I voted on approval or disapproval of your appointment—not that it would probably matter much anyway, given the drive of the folks across the way—what your position would be on that particular issue. Do parents know best what's good for their children, or does the state know best what's good for their children?

1040

Mr Post: I think in the mandate, in a lot of the vision in the paperwork that I've seen for the Early Years Steering Committee, it speaks a lot of the importance of parents, the importance of the role of parents in bringing up their children, and it talks a lot about being in communication with the parents, mostly with the parents, I think, to figure out what the needs of the parents are and how we can spend the money given by federal and provincial governments.

Mr Martin: If it became obvious to you in your capacity on this board that what was laid out in the Early

Years Study, which is that provincial children's organizations that spoke of their member agencies are seeing more children going hungry, children who have to be taken into care of children's aid because the family is homeless, more family stress and more mothers with children in shelters for the victims of family violence—would it be your feeling that the board should advise the government that it should not only leave in the hands of poor families the money they're getting from the federal government but increase that amount if it meant they could feed their children at home and house them more appropriately so that when they move out into the community they are able to more adequately participate in some of those education programs we're providing?

Mr Post: I think that's probably a question I'd better be able to answer for you if I was on the committee itself. I'm uncertain of a lot of the policies, a lot of the stuff that's going on. Even in my own community of Chatham-Kent, I'm not sure of the levels of poverty and how best to provide for that. I think that would come, similar to what the last gentleman said, by taking inventory of the community and being best able to then work from there.

Mr Martin: The folks who are out there now advocating on behalf of poor families and children—I'm referring specifically, and there are lots of others who are studying the circumstance and the situation at the moment, to Campaign 2000. That's a group which was put together back in the late 1980s or early 1990s to keep the federal government's feet to the fire on a commitment they made to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000.

In 1989, child poverty was one in 10; in the year 2000, it's one in five. We were told two weeks ago that in Toronto, where we've had unsurpassed economic growth, where we've had very positive job creation, where we've had people shifted from the so-called welfare rolls in large numbers, we still have an increasing level of poverty. So there's something wrong here. There's something not right.

I certainly have my suggestions and hunches as to what is wrong, but the reality is, and according to Campaign 2000, now in Toronto we have one in three children actually living in poverty.

Would it not be your instinct, as it is mine, that in fact we should be giving those poor families more assistance to take care of themselves and their children?

Mr Post: That might be my instinct, but I haven't done the research as you have done, perhaps. I haven't looked at the paperwork, the studies; I haven't talked to the people who are involved in such situations. So I wouldn't be able to give a good, solid—I could give a gut instinct, but I wouldn't be able to give one that I'd like to put on the record.

Mr Martin: Coming from a background of involvement in church, I would assume that you would see the reality of giving billions of dollars out in tax breaks, mostly accruing to those who have the bigger incomes, and it's logical that that happens, initially by way of income tax cuts and now over \$4 billion in tax cuts to

corporations, at the same time as we have a growing number of families out there and children now living in poverty—morally and ethically that would be wrong, would you say?

Mr Post: I think poverty is wrong. How the government has decided to do this, I don't think I'm qualified yet to make a moral or ethical decision on their policies.

Mr Martin: Well, this is indisputable, OK? The federal government two years ago decided to give all low-income families in the country a break in order to try and improve their circumstances as they moved toward the year 2000, and they made this commitment to eradicate child poverty. They decided to give each poor family in the province anywhere between \$80 and \$100 per child, depending on income level, to help with food, to pay the rent or to buy maybe an extra pair of sneakers so the child could participate in some school or community programs; all the things you, as a parent, want your children to participate in, that all the families out there who are living in poverty want their children to participate in as well.

The federal government decides they're going to give some of the surplus they're beginning to realize back to poor families, and the provincial government—and this is indisputable—has decided, in its wisdom, to claw back, dollar for dollar, from any family collecting assistance, whether that be Ontario Works, the Ontario disability support program or even families collecting OSAP who are going to school to better themselves. If there's a cheque going out from the provincial government to those families, the dollars they got from the federal government earlier on in the month by way of the national child tax benefit supplement are taken away, dollar for dollar. Do you think that's right?

Mr Post: Again, I'm not certain as to why they've chosen to do that and I don't feel qualified to give a professional response.

Mr Martin: Somebody who works in the church I would think would understand that, even if only from a moral and ethical perspective, this has to be wrong.

The government will tell you that the reason they're doing it is, they're taking that money and putting it into these other programs that are delivered in the community, and I think that's wonderful. Those programs are all very valuable and important programs, but the government has been given over \$900 million to spend on early childhood initiatives by the federal government. This is a government that's sitting on \$1 billion in surplus, a government that's already given billions of dollars away in tax breaks to our richer citizens and is now, in the budget that was just brought down last week, going to give another over \$4 billion in corporate tax breaks to people who, when you compare the plight of poor people to the plight of some of these corporations, really don't need it. What I'm claiming is that if they want to provide the programs, they're taking money that they're stealing from poor children to support—they should actually be spending that money on them instead of taking that money away. You don't see something wrong with that picture?

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Mr Chairman, do we allow the word “stealing” in this committee? We don’t in the House. I hope you don’t here and I would ask that he retract that type of comment.

The Chair: I will ask the member to withdraw the word “steal.”

Mr Stewart: It’s very unprofessional.

Mr Martin: Rather than “steal,” we’ll say—

The Chair: Are you withdrawing the word?

Mr Martin: I withdraw the word.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr Martin: —redirecting the money that they’re taking out of the mouths of poor children who are going hungry. As a matter of fact, I’ve talked to mothers in particular who themselves go hungry at the end of the month. They don’t eat so they can feed their children, because their level of income is so minimal in their instance. And some of the things that come at them—you know as a parent and I know as a parent, every month there’s always something, whether it’s a new shirt or whatever it is you’ve got to buy for your children. This government is taking that supplement, which the federal government has offered, away from those families who are most vulnerable and most at risk in our communities, and even if they are spending it on these worthwhile projects, they have other sources of money they could go to for those programs. You don’t see anything wrong with that picture?

Mr Post: One of the things I have learned in my church, including ethical and moral decisions, is that I’m supposed to be very slow to speak out against something.

Like I said, I have not done the research as you have done. I hear what you’re saying. When you talk about those women and the mothers who are starving and their kids are starving, I think that’s awful, I really do. Do I think the best way of doing it is the opposite of the way the official government has done it? I can’t comment on that. But I do agree with you; I think poverty is awful. These women and children who are starving, I think that’s awful. That’s one of the reasons why I want to sit on this committee.

1050

The Chair: Mr Martin, your time has expired. We’ll go to the government caucus.

Mr Wood: We’ll waive our time.

The Chair: The government caucus has waived its time. We’ll go to the official opposition.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I’m encouraged to understand that you were approached by a member of your community, someone who would know you, who would obviously judge that you might have something to contribute as you would participate in or on a steering committee that considers what services are available within your community to support families and children. This committee is a result of a recommendation from a document that the government commissioned. They commissioned Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain and they produced the Early Years Study. Have you had an opportunity to review that study?

Mr Post: A little bit, yes.

Mrs Dombrowsky: So you are familiar with the body of the document and, at the end, it has several recommendations.

Mr Post: It does. I couldn’t name them off for you, though.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I couldn’t either, although I could name several recommendations that are, I think, especially important for children in the province today.

The way the program is set up within communities, there is an expectation that the government will spend no money within any community until a community is able to raise money from within. Do you have an opinion about how appropriate it is to support the needs of families and children within communities conditionally? In other words, government is saying, “We think it’s important that programs be established. We’re going to provide money to support these programs, but only if the community can raise resources, and whatever they raise, we’ll match. We’re not going to provide more. There is a base level and then beyond that you are responsible for raising resources.” Do you have a comment on that?

Mr Post: About whether or not it’s appropriate or whether or not the government should just give the money regardless?

Mrs Dombrowsky: Given what you’ve read in the Early Years Study and how vitally important, how critical it is to support children in the early years, do you think it’s appropriate that programs the government would say are important to achieve that are supported conditionally upon the participation of community groups?

Mr Post: I like the idea of participation by community groups. I thought that was an excellent way. I think the study also talked about the need for community ownership of programs, if I’m not mistaken, but I might be.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Community participation, yes.

Mr Post: Community participation, but in doing so, the community is taking ownership of that program as well. The community itself wants to see this program run and will do its best to see that program run, and the government, then, is helping out that community with the funds, matching dollar for dollar. I thought that was a good way of working it. I didn’t see anything wrong with it.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Did you consider, for example, that there would be very small communities in Ontario that would not have the same opportunity or the same resources to access that there might be in your own community of Chatham, for example? I represent a large part of rural Ontario and there are many small rural communities where there’s not a lot of industry or corporations or service clubs. The challenge within those communities, in my opinion, if the deal is, “We’ll support you, but you have to come up with money and then we’ll match it,” is that that’s going to be more difficult in certain areas, not just in rural Ontario. I appreciate there can be situations even within the inner city, because the demand would be so much greater in

terms of the need for service. Do you think the government really has some responsibility to ensure at least a basic level of service across the province?

Mr Post: I'm not certain, but I believe for certain communities, rural areas, and, if I'm not mistaken, aboriginal areas as well the government provides more funding, that those communities didn't have to raise as much money. I'm uncertain as to the exact—I know for most communities it was supposed to be 50-50, but in other communities it might be 25-75. I'm not sure. So that would make it a little bit easier for those communities. Again, I don't know exactly if that's the best or if that's better or not as good. It could be; it might not be. I'm not really qualified.

Mrs Dombrowsky: OK. You did make a statement when you were speaking with the member from Sault Ste Marie that indicated that your experience or your personal practice would be that you would be slow to speak out on issues, and I can certainly appreciate that when we make statements as community representatives, we would want to be very measured and make considered statements. Do you have the sense, though, that when you're on a steering committee, you have an obligation to be a strong voice and advocate for the needs of families and children? Sometimes in that role we really are not afforded the luxury of being able to ponder an issue. It can happen that we are called to take a position at a moment's notice. Do you think you could do that?

Mr Post: I think those would be the challenging times to take that position, on a moment's notice. As much as possible, I'd rather postpone it. I think also as you sit on the committee, you'd become more and more familiar with the needs of the community, which I think would be very important if I'm ever going to fulfill the mandate of committee persons championing early development for children. I think that is a position, then, that you've taken once you've sat on that committee, that you believe strongly in the development of children in the younger years.

So sitting on this committee, I think there would be a very strong statement being made. I would be willing to make that statement that early childhood development is important. How that practically works itself out in the community I think would become clearer as I sat on the committee itself.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Do I still have some time?

The Chair: Yes, you still have three minutes.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I'd like to understand from you what you might, in your time as a resident within your community, have come to understand are the most pressing needs for families and children.

Mr Post: I'm uncertain as to the exact impact. I know that Chatham is going through a recession right now. There are a lot of people who have lost jobs in the automotive industries, and I'm sure that's had a significant impact on the situation for families. Now, exactly what kind of assistance they would require out of that, I'd be uncertain.

I also know that while we were in the hospital, one of the nurses commented on the number of single parents, mothers, who were coming in and delivering babies. The importance, I think, would be for them as well, for single-parent families. I suspect that's a need as well. Again, I'm uncertain. It's only been eight months. I wouldn't have a whole lot right off the bat to give you.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Are you familiar with parenting centres? Do you think that accessibility to affordable child care is an issue within your community? Are you familiar if there are waiting lists for regular child care spaces?

Mr Post: I am not familiar with the child care because my wife takes care of our child out of the home herself, so we don't use a whole lot of child care. I know that my wife does attend a Baby and I program, which provides information which she has found extremely helpful and very accessible. She has also been able to be in contact with lactation consultants from the hospital, and also the maternity ward from the hospital if she had questions. Pretty much any time of the day she can ask those questions, and she feels that she has knowledge at hand so that she can provide better care for our child and subsequently so can I, because she provides the information to me.

1100

Mrs Dombrowsky: So you would come to this role not necessarily having as a priority in your mind addressing some key needs that you would be aware of, even from within your faith community, where people would have come to you to say, "We, as parents, need to have specific services enhanced, because we just are not able to access them for our family." You would have nothing like that in mind right now?

Mr Post: In my own church community, I know one of the questions that has come up—and we are trying to address some of that—is just understanding parenting for new parents, their roles as parents, what they can do to provide the best care for their children. In our situation, it's not so much child care itself but just the passing on of knowledge and information to parents so that they can provide the best possible parenting for their child.

The Chair: That concludes the questions for this particular individual. Mr Post, thank you for being before the committee.

CATHERINE DENNAHOWER

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Catherine Dennaflower, intended appointee as member, the Early Years Steering Committee of the Niagara Regional Area Health Unit.

The Chair: Our next intended appointee, as a member of the Early Years Steering Committee of the Niagara Regional Area Health Unit, is Catherine Dennaflower. Welcome to the committee. You are of course welcome to make an initial statement should you see fit. Then each of the parties represented in the committee has up to 10 minutes to direct questions to you.

Ms Catherine Dennahower: It is a pleasure to be here and certainly an honour to be asked to come and a learning experience for this aging woman. I appreciate all of that. The following information, Mr Chair and members of the committee, that I will share with you this morning is, I hope, to assure the committee members present that I am a well-informed, highly respected, intelligent, community-minded individual. I am a tireless worker and a caring volunteer worthy of a public appointment to the Early Years Steering Committee of the Niagara Regional Area Health Unit. I always maintained that being humble achieved a great deal. Having read that first paragraph, I must apologize for bringing forth all my virtues.

My chosen career spans 33 years of dealing with children in the educational field. During my time as an educator, I held positions as a classroom teacher, a librarian, a special education teacher and a principal. I chose my profession because of my love of children and the concept that I would instil educational skills and social values within each child. Each child is a treasure that needs nurturing, love and direction.

My early years in the classroom dealt with the primary division, grades 1, 2 and 3. Eventually, my years of experience allowed me to take on the role of principal, which offered many challenges. This position involved motivation, personalities, organizational skills and many more qualifications too numerous to mention.

Approximately halfway through my career, I worked with kindergarten children for a period of 12 years. The importance of early years development was very evident to me. The diversified lifestyles, the ethnic backgrounds and the parenting skills of the family were like a kaleidoscope, a wonderful learning and giving experience for myself, and I am most grateful for that.

During the last part of my kindergarten days, I witnessed a pilot program, junior kindergarten. Of course, the child's learning abilities, social skills and behaviour changed dramatically in senior kindergarten, having had the more formal atmosphere of this previous training. This enabled me to evaluate the wealth of early years development.

The remaining years of my teaching career encompassed the library, special education and senior grades. Students in these areas demanded a great deal of attention in a variety of areas. I was very content with my duties and enjoyed the challenges presented.

In fact, my diversified career enabled me to be a more competent and enriched person. My involvement and expertise has inspired me to become a very community-oriented worker and volunteer. Both my municipality and the region have recognized these abilities. I was named volunteer of the year in our own town of Fort Erie. I also served as a director of community outreach. This organization contains a food pantry and a budgeting program, and reaches out to the community in several ways. A breakfast program also exists. I was part of that and am very proud to say that.

The Fort Erie chapter of the Heart and Stroke Foundation has a Jump Rope for Heart program in many of our

schools and I am chair of this very successful annual event. Some \$4,500 was raised by one of our schools just last week, so we are very, very proud of that. I also sit on the board of directors for Crime Stoppers of Niagara, where programs are developed for students to help them become more aware of making our communities and our schools better and safer places to live.

My work as a councillor on St Michael's parish council has also given me insight into the spiritual growth of the parish and our parishioners. Since gaming has become a great source of revenue for our town of Fort Erie, I sat on the gaming steering committee for the town, as well as the transit board. I have also assisted in the placement and education of many government-sponsored boat people from Vietnam and especially our own sponsored Vietnamese family—a wealth of learning for myself and for my family.

All of my undertakings and projects have been a fantastic learning experience for me and others involved with me. I have expressed my commitment to previous endeavours, and now my desire to participate in the Early Years Steering Committee of the Niagara regional area health unit. I look forward to the challenges of this new program.

The Chair: We will begin our questioning with the government caucus.

Mr Stewart: Welcome, Ms Dennahower—if I've pronounced that right.

Ms Dennahower: Yes, you did.

Mr Stewart: Mine is not a question to you. Mine is more of a comment. I have sat on this committee before. Unfortunately, this committee sometimes becomes a character assassination type of committee, which leaves me extremely cold. I don't condone that in any way. What I would like to—

Mr Martin: Point of order, Mr Chair: I would ask that the member who is speaking would withdraw the accusation that anybody on this committee is assassinating anybody's character.

Mr Stewart: I'll withdraw it and will say that some of the comments that people make toward other people are certainly not very appropriate.

If I look at a person like yourself and I look at your credentials here, I want to congratulate you, as well as the other two people that are putting their names forward to be part of a committee like this. If I look at your credentials, they suggest that you are a very caring and dedicated woman. If I also look at your credentials, being a classroom teacher and principal and all the other things that you have done in your few years, I do really want to congratulate you, because there are so many people who don't want to get involved with their communities. I think you should be very proud and I think we should be very proud to have somebody like you put your name forward to give consideration for this. I think you are extremely well qualified. Certainly your social values and for what you have been recognized by your own community says a whole lot. I would be extremely proud to support you in this nomination.

1110

Ms Dennahower: Thank you very much, Mr Stewart.

The Chair: Any other government members?

Mr Wood: We'll waive the balance of our time.

The Chair: We go to the official opposition.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Good morning, Ms Dennahower. I would agree with Mr Stewart; you certainly have been very active within your own community. You have listed here on your resumé that you have also been very politically active with the Progressive Conservative Party. Do you continue to be active with the party?

Ms Dennahower: Yes, I do.

Mrs Dombrowsky: At this time do you hold an executive position with the party?

Ms Dennahower: Just as a ladies' representative, yes, on the provincial executive.

Mrs Dombrowsky: At the provincial level.

Ms Dennahower: Yes, I am.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Very good.

With regard to the role that you have put your name forward for, did you respond yourself to an ad that was published in the paper? Were you asked by an individual within your community to consider the role? How is it that you've come to be here today?

Ms Dennahower: That was most interesting, because I had seen an advertisement in the paper of Dr Mustard, who was partaking and speaking in our area. I think perhaps—maybe Mr Bradley can help me with this—it may have been at the university series at Brock University. I was unable to attend that, and I was most anxious. When I had discovered and heard of the report coming out from Senator Margaret McCain and Dr Mustard, I thought, my, how wonderful, especially with what I had known and was very evident from my teaching years. Based on that opinion, I thought, "I've got to follow this forward now and see what's what."

I never did see an advertisement in the paper; I saw an advertisement for the early years coordinator. So possibly I missed anything else that may have been there, because had I seen anything, I certainly would have been very aware of it. I'm an avid newspaper reader at times.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Very good. So you are obviously aware of the Early Years Study and the recommendations contained within it.

Ms Dennahower: I am.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Are you familiar with the report last December that was released by the Education Improvement Commission, *The Road Ahead—V*? This was the final report from the Education Improvement Commission, that body that was created by this government to consider issues within education. That commission recommended that the government should invest more than \$1 billion to provide nearly universal daycare and full-day junior and senior kindergarten. Would you have an opinion on that recommendation, particularly from your perspective as a kindergarten teacher?

Ms Dennahower: I think perhaps one has to be on those committees and go into them in detail so that they know. We have to be aware of what we are in need of in

our area. That, I believe, is what we have to think about when these things are put forth. We can have recommendations coming from everywhere and every place, and they certainly aren't always what is needed everywhere.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I'm just curious in your perspective as an educator, particularly as a primary educator. Even if you don't feel comfortable making a comment on the recommendation on daycare, as a primary education and a former kindergarten teacher do you have an opinion on the value of a full-day junior and senior kindergarten program?

Ms Dennahower: Again, I truly believe that's going to depend on going into the schools and looking that situation over and seeing if this is what is needed in our area.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Are you familiar with the federal child development accord that was signed last fall between the federal government and the provinces in Canada?

Ms Dennahower: Was this the transfer of funds or funds involved with—

Mrs Dombrowsky: As a result of the accord, yes, some \$844 million will come to the province of Ontario over the next five years. As a matter of fact, on April 1, the province of Ontario received the first instalment from the federal government, \$114 million. Last week, the Minister of Community and Social Services, who now has responsibility for children's issues, made some announcements around the \$114 million. As part of that initiative, the \$30 million for the early years centres was included. So the work that you are about is a program that is being supported with federal dollars. Were you aware of that?

Ms Dennahower: Oh, yes, I did know that federal monies would be coming.

Mrs Dombrowsky: OK. With the transfer from the federal government, there were four areas that the province could consider supporting, four areas of needs for families and children. One area is daycare. This government has chosen not to direct one cent of the federal accord dollars to support daycare initiatives. Do you have an opinion on that?

Ms Dennahower: I suppose my opinion would be, again, that we have to know the needs of our own area. We have to be aware of what is needed before we can make those recommendations. I think one has to really become more involved in a committee such as this to see if that is needed.

Mrs Dombrowsky: You tell me that you read the paper. There has been, across the province, a forum taking place, sponsored by the Coalition for Better Child Care. I know that there was one of these forums in the Niagara area. Clearly what is consistently reported in all of the communities where the forum has taken place is that there is a dire shortage of regulated daycare spaces.

Does it not strike you as strange that, given this reality, the government has chosen not to use any of the federal money that has come to it? Very clearly it was an

area that the federal government said would qualify in terms of a program. Does it not strike you as strange that this government would not direct one cent toward supporting affordable, subsidized, regulated daycare for families and children in the province?

Ms Dennahower: Mrs Dombrowsky, as you're speaking, programs certainly are running in our area that certainly should enhance and help that situation. Parenting skills and responsibility are so important. Consequently, maybe we will look at that and know, when one is a member of the committee.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Yes, there are certainly a number of programs available now within communities. But what I'm saying to you is that it has been very clearly articulated by parents who have participated in the forums that what is in place nowhere near matches the need within communities. What they are saying is that the government has a responsibility to recognize and address it. Certainly it was the hope that with this new money from the federal government there would have been at least some of those resources directed toward improving the child care situation in the province, and that did not happen.

Ms Dennahower: Perhaps when we are concerned and we are involved in here we will see that there have been programs that are going to help out in that situation. I don't know. I can't give you a direct answer until I would be part of that committee, really. I appreciate your concern about it.

1120

Mrs Dombrowsky: Yes, it is a very clear and important one.

With regard to the work and the role of the Early Years Steering Committee, there is an expectation that the resources that will come to your community will be dependent upon the resources that you are able to raise locally. Do you think it is fair that the support of programs for families and children would be conditional in that way upon resources being raised locally?

I would ask that maybe before you respond you might consider that there would be locations in communities in areas in the province that would not have the same access to those resources that would be available in other communities. Conversely, there might be large urban centres where the needs are significant and there simply are not enough resources to assist them. Do you have an opinion about how appropriate it is that supporting these programs would be conditional in that way?

Ms Dennahower: That word "conditional" can be interpreted in many ways, can't it?

Mrs Dombrowsky: Basically what the government has said is, "We will match whatever you raise locally."

Ms Dennahower: There is a great deal—again, my own personal opinion—that goes on in bringing a community together in co-operation, in partnering. I have discovered that in our area now with the tourists we are beginning to partnership. Our town is beginning to boom because we seem to have that reinforcement of community. I think perhaps reinforcement is not all that bad, and partnering is not all that bad.

Mr Martin: Thank you for coming this morning. I want to, right upfront, tell you how much I appreciate the fact that you put out on the table immediately your political affiliation. I think that's a good thing to do, and it is important for us to know.

Ms Dennahower: Just before you begin, Mr Martin, my concern is the child. I'm here regarding early childhood development. Thank you for commenting, but I would like you to know that.

Mr Martin: I want to talk to you a bit about that because my concern and the concern of a whole lot of people I've been in contact with over the last number of months out there in communities is that in fact the concern of this government isn't the child as much as it is financial considerations and stimulating the economy and making sure that those who have, get more, and in fact they have started out on a campaign to take away from those who have less even more, so that in the end they're not able to look after their children. This new initiative of these committees that are being set up across the province is simply an initiative to somehow cover over some of the cracks that are beginning to appear in the system.

For example, in the Early Years Study it became obvious in the consultation that Dr Mustard had that many people were concerned that families didn't have the resources they needed to look after themselves. The sense I have is that this government feels the state does that better, that the state knows better, the state can manage money better. Therefore for them to be taking the money that traditionally and historically has gone to families to make sure that they're able to feed their children and put clothes on their children and house their children means they don't trust them any more to do that and so the state will do that. What's your view? Who is ultimately and in the end responsible for making sure children have what they need?

Ms Dennahower: My opinion is that the parents or parent has that responsibility.

Mr Martin: Do you see it as appropriate that the provincial government would claw back, dollar for dollar, from some of our more vulnerable and at-risk families the money that the federal government is giving them by way of the national child tax benefit supplement which was instituted to support poor families across this country? Do you see that as an appropriate initiative of this government?

Ms Dennahower: I truly think, Mr Martin, our province of Ontario is giving responsibility to parents and attempting to promote the parenting skills that are truly needed. We need to enforce that responsibility with people. We need to have the parenting skills. That's what it's all about. We need those parents to know what to do. We need those parents to know how to budget. We need to teach those parents. When you think of years ago, I remember my grandmother not having very much and we never knew what was going to be on the table. I think we're helping. We're doing wonderful things, and I think this in particular too is going to be a wonderful thing.

Mr Martin: You think it's a wonderful thing to be taking upwards of \$80 to \$100 a month per child away from some of our more vulnerable and at-risk families in the interest of teaching them parenting skills?

Ms Dennahower: Not if it's not going to be directed in a program that's going to perhaps replace that. Often I think that does happen. That's again my own personal opinion, but I do think we have organizations and areas that are enhanced in different ways.

Mr Martin: Your feeling is that if you take that money away from those families—you know, if you listen to some of what the people out there are saying, we now have one in three children in Toronto living in poverty and more and more families homeless and living on the streets of this great city. It says here, "A family who does not have a place to live is not going to be able to provide a stable home environment for their children. This message was reinforced by provincial children's services organizations who spoke of their member agencies seeing more children who are going hungry, children who have to be taken into care of the children's aid society because the family is homeless, more family stress and more mothers with children in shelters for the victims of family violence."

If that's what's happening out there and these folks are saying to leave the child tax supplement in the hands of those families so that they can feed themselves and their children, perhaps put a little bit into the ever-increasing cost of rent for a home, and even if they are taking that money and putting it into other, more community-based programs that aren't directly helping these families feed themselves, this is OK?

Ms Dennahower: Again, until you are right there and you know these things and you know where it's coming from, it's difficult to say, isn't it? This item that I found a while back, in fact I think it was dated April some time, says there are fewer needy kids in Canada, a report. So we contradict one another, don't we, until we're right there and know and have the involvement that can tell us these facts and that they are the right and accurate facts. This is the item I had found that said there were fewer needy kids in Canada.

Mr Martin: The people who are right there, the people who are working in children's aid societies, who are saying their caseloads are increasing—that's why the government is giving them more money—the group that tabled the report that I referenced earlier that suggested that one in three children in Toronto, the heartland of the Canadian economy, are now living in poverty, are saying it is severe, that mothers are making decisions, near the end of the month particularly, to not eat so that they can feed their children.

We had a mother before us in this Legislature before Christmas who told us she lost a baby because she wasn't able to provide the nourishment necessary to make sure that baby had a fighting chance at survival once it was born. She talked about having two children who are undersized because she's not able to provide the kind of nutrition that's necessary on the income she has now because she lost 22% of her income when this govern-

ment moved to reduce welfare by 22% in June 1995. There doesn't seem to be any recognition by this government that those kinds of initiatives are having that kind of outcome and impact, and those folks who are working with those people out there are saying the very same things.

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My hope is that there would be some members, given that we're moving forward aggressively on putting in place these committees that you're seeking to be appointed to today, who would be willing to be forthright and honest and aggressive in telling the government that what they're doing is hurting poor families and hurting children.

Ms Dennahower: That's what I would hope we would find out, and if I happen to be a member, I would find out. If those are horrific things, we don't want that going on in our province. We don't want that going on in Canada. But shame on me and shame on you and the rest of us if we aren't taking some responsibility and helping out, Mr Martin.

The Chair: Thank you very much. You may step down.

The committee will now deal with the intended appointees and I will be prepared to accept motions by any members of the committee in this regard. The first one we will consider is that of Mr John Arnott.

Mr Wood: I move concurrence re Dr Arnott.

The Chair: Concurrence has been moved by Mr Wood. Any comment, first of all, any discussion? Mr Martin, you have your hand up?

Mr Martin: I can't support this appointment. By way of the response to some of the questions I asked, I think this is a person who is obviously going to support the agenda of this government that's playing out there right now, which is really hurting some of our more vulnerable and at-risk families, and is obviously not willing to listen or try to understand the other side of the equation here. It would be in my view a carrying out of my worst fear re this committee, that in fact it simply becomes a committee that coats over, fills in the cracks and becomes a vehicle of this government to deliver an agenda that is more in keeping with what we saw in the budget of last week and the speech from the throne, which is more tax breaks and money for those who have, and less money and support and services for those who don't. This is a government that believes the rich don't have enough and the poor have too much, and they're going to fix that.

If we're going to support the appointment of the nature of the gentleman whose name is on the table at this point in time, I think we'll just get more of the same. We'll have people not only at Queen's Park driving that agenda, but we'll have a vehicle driving that same agenda in our communities. I think that will be to the detriment of those families that are most vulnerable and most at risk among us. So I won't be supporting that.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I don't usually comment before a vote, but I do feel compelled in this particular case to share with members of this committee an inconsistency I

did observe with the presentation of this candidate, who was very open with regard to his political affiliation.

Obviously he would be an individual who would espouse the idea that tax cuts are a good idea. I've heard members of the government present the notion that taxpayers know best how to spend their money, so we're going to give them their money so that they can spend it. But in the case of the poor, the government is saying, "You receive a child tax benefit. We're not so sure you know how best to spend it, so we're going to take it back and we're going to provide programs for poor and needy families." I see an inconsistency here in your philosophy about who knows best how to provide what their family needs.

It's important for me that I take this opportunity to put this on the record. For this reason, I will not be able to support Dr Arnott.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I'd like to request a recorded vote.

The Chair: Any other comment before we have that? We have a request for a recorded vote on Mr John Arnott, an intended appointee to the Early Years Steering Committee of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

Ayes

Johnson, Ouellette, Stewart, Wood.

Nays

Crozier, Dombrowsky, Martin.

The Chair: The motion is carried.

The second one we deal with is Mr Scott Post, who is an intended appointee as member, the Early Years Steering Committee of the Chatham-Kent Health Unit.

Mr Wood: I move concurrence re Mr Post.

The Chair: Concurrence has been moved by Mr Wood. Any discussion?

Mr Martin: I'm sort of betwixt and between on this one. I want to support Mr Post and probably will in the end, but I just need to put on the record my concern re his hesitation to in fact take the bull by the horns in recognizing—and even indicating that when in fact he might recognize there's a problem for families out there who are in need, he might not be willing to move aggressively and quickly to try to resolve some of the issues. That leaves me uneasy, because a lot of the families out there that I've come in contact with and I hear about through the people I've met with over the last few months tell me those people need immediate relief. They can't wait until we figure out as a government what it is we should or could or can or must be doing.

This government, if it had any understanding at all or any conscience around the question of the needy needing resources to feed themselves and their families, would and could decide today to stop clawing back the child tax benefit supplement. It wouldn't cost them a penny, not a

cent, and they could continue to support those wonderful programs they're putting this money into from the surplus or from the over \$900 million they're getting from the federal government, or even reduce ever so insignificantly the big tax break they're going to be giving to corporations over the next year to provide those programs and support those families.

So even though I have some reservation in terms of Mr Post's intestinal fortitude where moving aggressively and quickly on some of these things is concerned, I still think, given the empathy that I heard in his voice and some of what he said and seems to feel strongly about, and certainly some of his moral and ethical root in his church community, that at the end of the day he will be helpful and perhaps a good appointment. My hope is that he will be, and so I'll be supporting his appointment this morning.

Mr Johnson: I'd request a recorded vote.

The Chair: A recorded vote has been requested. Any discussion before we have the recorded vote?

All in favour? Opposed? Motion carried.

Mr Wood: That was a recorded vote, Mr Chairman.

The Chair: Oh, yes, of course. If we're going to have a recorded vote, our clerk is going to call out the names. Thank you, Mr Johnson, for requesting that.

Ayes

Crozier, Dombrowsky, Johnson, Martin, Ouellette, Stewart, Wood.

The Chair: The motion is carried.

The next one is Catherine Dennaower, who is an intended appointee as member, the Early Years Steering Committee of the Niagara Regional Area Health Unit.

Mr Wood: I move concurrence re Catherine Dennaower.

The Chair: Concurrence has been moved by Mr Wood. Any discussion?

Mr Martin: On this one, I think I can support given her last comment and given that I feel she was sincere in that comment. Again, though, I have some reservation in that she danced around the question of who ultimately was responsible for making sure children were looked after: is it the parents or is it the government?

Ms Dombrowsky pointed out the sort of inconsistency that seems to be there where, on one hand, this government believes the taxpayer should have the money so that they can make personal decisions about where they might spend it and, as she rightly points out, in the instance of where the poor are concerned, they believe they should not have the money, that in fact the government knows better and should be making decisions about how that money should be spent on behalf of their children.

However, I was impressed, I have to say, by her last answer to the question. She does have a good background in education and is very much involved in her community, obviously committed to improving the lot of her

community. My hope is that in being part of this committee and participating actively in that and in discovering some of what the people who advocate for and work with and on behalf of the poor in our communities experience, she will come to the same conclusion I have, which is that it's really important that we return to poor families the capacity to look after themselves, to pay the rent and to provide a safe and comfortable home for themselves and their children, to put food on the table, to clothe themselves and their children appropriately, given the seasons we experience in this country, and to be able to provide the resources necessary so that they themselves and their children will be able to participate in the programs of the community, whether it be at school, in recreation or whatever.

I hope she will act accordingly and will act out of the compassion and understanding she shared in the last answer she gave to my question here this morning, so I'll be supporting this appointment as well.

Mr Crozier: I just have a brief observation about Ms Dennahower's comments. I followed very closely what she had to say and I've looked at her record of volunteerism in the community and particularly her experience as an educator. As an observation, it was surprising to me that when asked about her view on full-time junior and senior kindergarten, she seemed to avoid the answer in that I believe what she was said was, "You have to kind of be there and know the circumstances that surround it." I just found it surprising that someone with her experience and dedication to education wouldn't simply say that it's better for someone to have full-day JK/SK than to have anything less than that.

I wanted to put that on the record, because then you begin to wonder whether some of the other answers were guarded, as that one was.

Mr Johnson: I'd like to request a recorded vote.

The Chair: A recorded vote has been requested. Any further discussion before we have the vote? If not, we'll have the recorded vote.

Ayes

Johnson, Martin, Ouellette, Stewart, Wood.

Nays

Crozier, Dombrowsky.

The Chair: The motion is carried.

I believe that completes the business of the committee for today. In regard to the matter we discussed earlier—sorry. Yes, Mr Crozier?

Mr Crozier: Just a question. I would like to bring up again today—and I'm assuming, since the clerk hasn't given us the written response from the secretariat with regard to information from the secretariat on available appointments, that we just haven't received it.

Clerk Pro Tem (Ms Tonia Grannum): No, I haven't received it.

Mr Crozier: I would appreciate it if the Chair and/or the clerk could get in touch with the secretariat and ask that that written response be forthcoming.

The Chair: And on the other matter that we discussed of scheduling, we will, I suppose, try on an informal basis to get a subcommittee together so we can make a determination, because there are some logistical problems that Mr Wood has brought to our attention and there may be a way of resolving those that will be satisfactory to all three parties represented on the committee. So hopefully that can be done.

Mr Wood: I'm available right now, if anybody else is.

Interjections.

The Chair: If we're not at this time, I will try to get us together at a convenient time soon.

Mr Wood: I stand available, subject to schedule.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We appreciate that very much, Mr Wood, and the representatives of the other two parties.

Any other business to come before the committee? If not, I'll accept a motion of adjournment.

Mr Wood: So moved.

The Chair: Moved by Mr Wood. All in favour? Carried.

The committee adjourned at 1145.

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