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Monday 29 March 2010

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Lundi 29 mars 2010

**Standing Committee on
Social Policy**

Full Day Early Learning
Statute Law
Amendment Act, 2010

**Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Loi de 2010 modifiant des lois en
ce qui concerne l'apprentissage
des jeunes enfants à temps plein

Chair: Shafiq Qadri
Clerk: Katch Koch

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE

Monday 29 March 2010

Lundi 29 mars 2010

The committee met at 1359 in committee room 1.

FULL DAY EARLY LEARNING STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'APPRENTISSAGE DES JEUNES ENFANTS À TEMPS PLEIN

Consideration of Bill 242, An Act to amend the Education Act and certain other Acts in relation to early childhood educators, junior kindergarten and kindergarten, extended day programs and certain other matters / Projet de loi 242, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les éducateurs de la petite enfance, la maternelle et le jardin d'enfants, les programmes de jour prolongé et d'autres questions.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, colleagues, and welcome again to day three of hearings of the Standing Committee on Social Policy with reference to Bill 242.

CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): We have our first presenter of the day, Mr. Gary Malkowski. Welcome, Mr. Malkowski. It's an honour to have you here. Just for the benefit of the committee, as you'll know, Mr. Malkowski served in the Legislature of Ontario from the years 1990 to 1995.

You'll have 10 minutes, sir, in which to make your presentation. I would invite you to please begin now.

Mr. Gary Malkowski [Interpretation]: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity to present to you.

Before I begin my presentation, I have brought a photocopy of an article from Exceptional Family, Canada's resource magazine for parents of exceptional children. It's the spring 2010 edition. There's an article here, "Sign Language for Children Who Can Hear and Speech for Children Who Are Deaf." It's a very interesting article. The policy here in Ontario is that parents are not allowed to have both auditory/verbal therapy and American sign language. Often, parents are caught in an untenable position where they want both but they are not provided that option. That creates a barrier for them. This is more for your information.

The Canadian Hearing Society is an agency which has worked for 70 years with and for people who are

culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing. We operate in 28 offices across Ontario. CHS strives to develop high-quality and cost-effective services in consultation with national, provincial, regional and local consumer groups and individuals.

CHS is the leading provider of services, products and information that remove barriers to communication, advance hearing health and promote equity for people who are culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing.

The government's plan for the Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, as set out in Bill 242, has serious problems.

Bill 242 does not include services for deaf and hard-of-hearing children in provincial schools, i.e. nursery school or preschool programs for those children who are aged between two and four, since this bill is only authorizing school boards to be allowed to establish early childhood education services and programs. Bill 242 provides no guaranteed access and accommodation for deaf and hard-of-hearing children in school boards' early childhood education programs, including nursery school or preschool programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

In an important way, Bill 242 violates the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by the government of Canada, by not providing deaf and hard-of-hearing children with accessible early childhood education programs in both provincial schools and school boards; for example, sign language environments similar to the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf's Happy Hands preschool programs for deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing children.

Bill 242 does not address the needs of deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing preschool children in northern Ontario and rural areas who are in dire need of services from the Ministry of Education.

Bill 242 raises more questions than it answers.

Will this mandate schools to include early childhood services for deaf children at provincial schools?

Will it provide accessible early childhood education services and programs to deaf children and hard-of-hearing children who are in school board programs?

Will it provide access and accommodation policies in school boards and provincial school programs as well as for the College of Early Childhood Educators when

communicating directly with parents who are culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing?

Our recommendations for Bill 242 are offered here as amendments only if the government decides to go ahead with this bill.

Ensure Bill 242 does not take away any rights from children as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Ensure that Bill 242 does not take away any services from preschool children at provincial schools for the deaf and the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf's Happy Hands programs and services.

Include a mandate of early childhood education programs and services for deaf and hard-of-hearing children who are in school board and provincial school programs in Bill 242.

Ensure Bill 242 shall define clearly how parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children and parents who are culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing will know about accessible early childhood education programs and how they will be able to get in touch with her or him if they need information and access to accommodation provisions. For example, there is nothing that says parents have that information right in their hands, and nothing that says they need accessible ways to contact the office of the College of Early Childhood Educators—for example, the ability to make a private call, use a TTY or video relay services, or request sign-language interpreting.

Ensure that public consultations, and the legislative and policy decisions that will eventually result from them, will help all children with disabilities, including those who are culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing, while also increasing public awareness and removing the stereotypical thinking and negative attitudes toward culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing children.

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Ensure that public consultation processes be accessible to culturally deaf, oral deaf and hard-of-hearing young people who require more lead time to contact, arrange and confirm support services, such as sign language interpreters and real-time captioners. These support services enable culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing young people to prepare their submissions and presentations and to express their ideas in their own language or by a means accessible to them. Limited literacy levels mean that some consumers require more time to read and understand Bill 242 and its implications.

Ensure that through policy development and attitude barriers awareness training, Bill 242 confronts and eradicates ableist and audist attitudes and behaviours in school board and provincial schools' early childhood education programs and the College of Early Childhood Educators.

Ensure that the school boards, provincial schools and College of Early Child Educators hires trained staff who communicate using sign language and have the know-

ledge, understanding of and sensitivity to culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing children and their parents when providing services regionally and provincially.

Ensure that there are clear internal policies and procedures for providing access and accommodation for culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing children in school boards, provincial schools and College of Early Childhood Educators

Provide regular, mandatory awareness training be provided to all levels of staff of the school boards and provincial schools' early childhood education programs as well as for the College of Early Childhood Educators about the communication needs of culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing children and how to meet these needs.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Has Mr. Malkowski stopped?

Mr. Gary Malkowski: No.

In conclusion, CHS strongly endorses the immediate need for establishing and providing for accessible and effective early childhood education programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing children. Bill 242 needs to include an enforcement mechanism, quality assurance and sufficient resources to ensure that qualified accommodation measures are available, for example, sign language interpreting and real-time captioning. The legislation needs to have authority and be suitably funded so that proper systems can be set up to monitor and enforce the powers and functions of College of Early Childhood Educators in the early childhood education programs in school boards and provincial schools by strengthening Bill 242.

Bill 242 will clearly be inadequate unless amendments to include services for deaf and hard-of-hearing children in school boards and provincial schools' early childhood education programs are made before third reading.

Bill 242 falls significantly short of what is needed to strengthen and improve the effectiveness in the delivery of accessible and effective early childhood education services and programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

The above recommendations are clearly supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Ontario Human Rights Code—for example, the Ontario Human Rights Code policy and guidelines on disability and the duty to accommodate—and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act—i.e., regulations on customer service.

CHS is prepared to work closely with school boards and provincial schools' early childhood education programs and the College of Early Childhood Educators to develop appropriate policies and provide awareness training for school boards, provincial schools and the College of Early Childhood Educators personnel to ensure culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing parents and their children can be full participants in any services in which they may be involved.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you very much, Mr. Malkowski. We really have a few seconds

left, so I think that, on behalf of the committee I will attempt my first coherent sentence in sign language and that is this: For Ontario, thank you very much for coming. Thank you.

Mr. Gary Malkowski: You're most welcome.

LAKESHORE COMMUNITY
CHILD CARE CENTRE

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I will now move to our next presenter Ms. Tjernstrom, on behalf of the Lakeshore Community Child Care Centre. Just to notify colleagues and all those who are going to testify before us, you have 10 minutes in which to make your combined presentations. Time remaining within that will be distributed amongst the parties evenly for questions.

I invite you to please begin now.

Ms. Lisa Tjernstrom: Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee. I was compelled to come and share some thoughts and concerns about this historic opportunity with the implementation of universal full-day early learning for four- and five-year-olds in Ontario.

I'm the director of a not-for-profit child care centre that's been serving families in Etobicoke for 20 years. We take great pride in our program, the excellence of our staff, homemade nutritious lunches and an ability to meet the needs of children and their families. We have excellent facilities in a purpose-built building, as well as shared space in a TDSB school. We are sure to lose some or all of our shared space as the school reclaims their classrooms for a full-day early learning program.

We care for 118 children every day. Of these, 32 are four- and five-year-olds and 60 are in grades 1 through 5. We're worried about the future viability of our centre as we lose the older children and replace them with infants, toddlers or preschoolers who are far more expensive to care for. These will rise significantly in an area that is already too expensive for many parents to afford and has not enough money to pay ECE staff the salaries they deserve. Many families that would be eligible for a fee subsidy will not be able to access one due to the long subsidy waiting list. Existing child care programs will need capital and transitional funding to remain viable as they turn to serve the younger population.

Many of our concerns with the implementation of full-day early learning revolve around the quality of care that will be offered to children in the new model. The early learning program should not be diminishing the quality of our current standards. Currently, licensed child care is regulated by the Day Nurseries Act and, in Toronto, by the Toronto operating criteria.

We offer year-round, consistent care with professional staff, a hot nutritious lunch and two snacks a day. In our ratios of 1 to 8 or 1 to 10, with a maximum group size of 24, we're better able to interact with children as they explore their world and learn through play. Our ECE staff always have the support of other staff in the program, if not in the same classroom, at the very beginning and at the very end of the day.

We're concerned that Bill 242 does not address the year-round early learning program; that class size is not capped at 26 but rather is an average; that the extended day needs to have more than one ECE responsible for a group of children and the hours for ECEs are not mandated to be full-time jobs; that school boards are being grossly underfunded and will be forced to take from one program to pay for the other; that there's no funding for any management structure within the schools to run the programs or for quality assessment; and that there's no provision for nutrition.

With only three months left in this school year, so many questions remain unanswered for children, families and professionals. We don't know if there will be additional subsidies available for this program and how they'll be managed. We don't know how much the extended day will cost and what that cost will include.

We're concerned that Charles Pascal's full vision has not been addressed. He recommended an integrated program with improvements for all children from zero to 12. This piece, which culls four- and five-year-olds out of licensed child care, has the capacity to undermine existing resources and propagate our fragmented system.

You have an opportunity to refine this legislation to mandate school boards to follow best practices for children and families in Ontario, and I'm here to ask you to do so.

That is all.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thanks very much, Ms. Tjernstrom. You've left a generous amount of time for questions, I guess about two minutes or so per side, beginning with you, Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You've raised a lot of good questions. I've raised many similar problems in my speech when I spoke to this bill. We're very worried. My sense is that they haven't thought it through very well. I'm a big supporter of this program, but if you don't think it through very well, you're jeopardizing not just this program but many of the other existing programs.

One of the questions I want to ask you is, the government has said that they will continue with the \$63-million funding for child care, which is a continuation of what the feds had given. Now they're going to give their own money finally, which is a good thing. They say that, and it makes it appear as if somehow that money might solve some of these other questions that you've raised around licensed non-profit child care centres that, when you pull those kids out, might still be in jeopardy. Does that \$63 million help in any way?

Ms. Lisa Tjernstrom: It keeps what we have alive; it doesn't give us anything new. Basically, it supports the subsidized system. So what it does is, it keeps the centres we have now viable with what they have now. My board of directors said to me last week, when I was sending out an email saying, "Phew. Thank God we got that"—someone said, "Have you ever celebrated so much for what you've already had?"

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's right, and that's my worry, because they give the impression that we've

solved all the problems of child care, including the problems that flow from this bill. My point with you is that they haven't.

Ms. Lisa Tjernstrom: No. They saved us, but they didn't solve anything.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right. Unless there's some money that keeps supporting the work you've done, many are still threatened with closures. Is that not correct?

Ms. Lisa Tjernstrom: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Mr. Flynn?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for coming today, and thanks for the work you do with our children. Am I right to assume that you support the concept for four- and five-year-olds?

Ms. Lisa Tjernstrom: Yes.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Okay, so you support the idea, and what concerns you is how the system is going to evolve and what role your organization will play in this?

Ms. Lisa Tjernstrom: Frankly, I'm not as concerned for my personal organization. We have a strong, healthy base. We have a huge waiting list for toddlers. I could expand to the younger kids and probably have a population that could afford to pay whatever we're going to ask them to. But that doesn't answer the problem for the rest of the province.

Frankly, the people who are in need of a child care subsidy are most people. There are very few people I know who can afford to pay—our fees right now are, for a toddler, \$217.50 a week, and for a preschooler, \$183 a week. So if you have two kids, you're talking \$400-plus a week for child care, and that's only going to go up. With the lack of subsidies, centres are threatened because if you can't bring them in, you can't stay open.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: At some point in the past—it wasn't that long ago—quite a few of us were hoping to see a national child care strategy, across the country, that protected all children. "Protected" wouldn't be the right word; perhaps—

Ms. Lisa Tjernstrom: Served.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: "Served all children" would be better. That fell by the wayside, and Ontario has agreed to make up for some of the shortcomings of the previous program. Are you advocating with the federal government as strongly as you are with us?

Ms. Lisa Tjernstrom: Oh, absolutely.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Well, that's wonderful. So you're saying that you support the concept, but there are some changes that need to be made to make it work in the way that it should?

Ms. Lisa Tjernstrom: I think that at the end of the day, what's good for children is good for their families, but it needs to not be okay just because it's free. It needs to still offer all the best that we've come so far—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Flynn. To you, Ms. Witmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much for your presentation. Actually, it's similar to many others that we've heard from the people who are providing child care on the impact it's going to have on their centres. Some of them are actually quite heartbreaking. They've been around for many years in the province, families love them and trust them, and some of them are not going to be able to survive. I hear you say that you have a strong base of support. They're going to go out of business.

So I guess that's one of the concerns that I personally had: the lack of foresight and consultation that was involved in bringing forward this bill and in, somehow, taking into consideration the impact it has on you and others and, as a consequence, some of the children. If daycares go under, there simply won't be any place for these younger children to go. So I appreciate that you have come forward.

Do you think you'll always have the same number? Have you found another physical location from the school where you are?

Ms. Lisa Tjernstrom: Well, no. We have a purpose-built building. Whether that survives—I'm sensing at this point it will and that we'll still have it. But certainly, I know lots—and having said that, having said that my centre will survive, we will not still be an employer of the size we are now. We'll have to lose at least four or maybe six staff.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much. I appreciate your time.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you very much, Ms. Witmer, and thanks—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Mr. Chair, we don't have a copy of her comments. Can we get a copy of her comments?

Ms. Lisa Tjernstrom: My husband drove away with the 25 copies. I'm really sorry.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): There's opportunity for you to furnish it to the committee afterwards, so please feel free to do that.

Ms. Lisa Tjernstrom: I will. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you very much on behalf of the committee.

MS. SHANI HALFON

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I'd now invite our next presenter, Ms. Halfon, to please come forward. She's coming to us, I guess, in her capacity as a private citizen.

I'd invite you to please begin now.

Ms. Shani Halfon: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Shani Halfon. I am an early childhood educator, a university student and a parent, but I'm coming here today more on behalf of children in Ontario.

I am aware of the issues and challenges facing the implementation of the full-day learning program for four- and five-year-old children in Ontario, as well as those pertaining to Bill 242. I have provided a write-up on the specific aspects of Bill 242 that I see as potentially

threatening to the quality of the early learning program. I attended the public hearing last Monday, and I believe the committee is well aware of the various concerns from people and organizations in child care, education and other services and programs for young children. I too have these concerns. My greatest concern, however, is that among all the worries and demands, the vision of an integrated, accessible and high-quality early learning and care system will be lost.

Thankfully, the announcement of funding for child care in last Thursday's budget has calmed some primary concerns from the child care sector in this province. However, I believe there are still considerable questions remaining around the impacts of full-day learning on these programs' functioning.

Currently, Ontario, like much of the rest of this country, suffers from a confusing, desperately underfunded and inefficient system of programs for young children. This system leaves children vulnerable to a shaky start in life and denies them the right to their share of our country's wealth and resources. The current situation in Ontario leaves little room for a program like full-day learning to be implemented without creating significant impacts on existing programs that will threaten their viability and, in some cases, cause resistance to the program. Although I want nothing more than for this program to move forward, be successful and become a permanent part of the education system in Ontario, I fear that children will not benefit fully from this program if we do not take into account the very details that the program aimed to confront.

Charles Pascal made it very clear in his report to the Premier that to "fully benefit from full-day early learning for four- and five-year-olds, we must deal with the chaotic mix of child and family services we currently have in our communities." This system is so fragile that, although its providers and practitioners support full-day learning, their very existence is threatened by it. The consequence now is that this foundational program that aims to see all four- and five-year-olds in the province with accessible, high-quality early learning and care, while supporting their families to work and have increased opportunities for prosperity, is being pulled apart by various interests that have valid reasons to demand the protection of their resources, programs and jobs.

The reality is, however, that for this program to work the way it was intended by Pascal and those he extensively consulted with, the school boards are supposed to provide full-day, full-year care for children from the ages of four to 12. This vision was meant to integrate services within schools, so that they were more accessible for families, bureaucratic duplication was eliminated, and our resources and facilities were used in the most effective and efficient ways. Most importantly, this program was meant to limit the amount of transitions young children have to make during a time in their lives when security, stability and consistency provide the optimal opportunity for strong development and growth.

The reality is that there is room for everyone to participate in the plan set out by Charles Pascal. If you look at early childhood education and care for children under four, you'll find extensive waiting lists and a severe shortage of spaces. Inevitably, the spaces left by the four- and five-year-olds moving to the full-day learning program will be gladly filled by those younger children. However, the child care sector must be provided with adequate resources and time to transition their services to cater to younger children.

School-age children also suffer from a severe shortage of accessible and affordable programs. High-quality programs already catering to this age group also have extensive waiting lists. The government of Ontario must take the needs of all players in the field of services for young children and families into account, but not lose sight of the ultimate vision of an integrated system of programs and services that aim to strengthen families and, most importantly, support all of Ontario's children to have the best possible start and finish in life. This will undoubtedly involve changes that may not be perceived as beneficial to all parties involved, but the question remains: Who is this system for? I thought it was for children.

I am not under the impression that this is an easy task, but I do know that it is possible. I also know that it is necessary for Canada to step up to the plate in terms of the provision of early childhood education and care, and that Ontario is meant to lead the way. Although some of you sitting before me may not even support the full-day learning program, the evidence is convincing that Ontario's children need the support and opportunity that the plan set out by Charles Pascal provides.

The persistence of child and family poverty and the reality that parents, including mothers, have no choice but to work in order to support their families, means that it is time to build a system that will enable all children access to education and care that meets the needs of their families and provides them with quality environments to learn and grow.

Additionally, it only makes sense to provide these services in the most efficient and effective way, and in order to do this, some things are going to have to change. These changes will not be easy for everyone; however, the main goal is to make things easier for children.

I feel that we have an opportunity in Ontario to get early learning and care right for our youngest citizens, and that we must not lose sight of the reasons this program was put forth as we tackle the many challenges of implementation.

1430

Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Halfon. About a minute per side. Just to alert the committee, Parliament has actually adjourned. We'll start with the government side: Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you very much for your presentation today. As I understand it, you agree with the concept of full-day learning.

Ms. Shani Halfon: Absolutely.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: As I understand it, you are an early childhood educator, or you're soon to be?

Ms. Shani Halfon: I am. I'm an early childhood educator already, but I'm also going to get a degree in early childhood education at the end of this year.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Wonderful. I've heard some say that this will elevate the profession. I know that, from my early days chairing the child care committee in the region of Halton, the pay level for early childhood educators and the respect they earned weren't what they should be. Are there parts of this bill that you could see will be elevating the profession as well as doing something good for the children?

Ms. Shani Halfon: Specifically elevating? I'm not really sure yet. I can't say yes to that question. I am concerned with the idea that school boards might be able to get out of hiring qualified ECEs.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I don't think that's the intent. I know what you're talking about.

Ms. Shani Halfon: I hope that's not going to happen, and I explained why I fear that's detrimental to the quality of the program. We'll see.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you very much, Mr. Flynn. Ms. Witmer?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much for sharing your concerns with us. I hope the government will take them into consideration when they make the improvements and strengthen the bill.

Ms. Shani Halfon: Me too. Thanks.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Shani. I agree with your concern about the letter of permission. That's what you were talking about. I raised those concerns as well in my remarks when I spoke to this bill. It could be a way of avoiding the payment of ECEs, or having ECEs.

Ms. Shani Halfon: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's your point, and I share that. Thanks for your comment about capping the class sizes at 26. The government still wants to pretend that it's capped at 26, but it isn't; it's an average. If it is 26, can you live with that number?

Ms. Shani Halfon: Yes, as long as the before- and after-school care is properly staffed and there are two trained professionals with the children at all times.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Keep on insisting on that cap, because we have yet to persuade the government to do that.

Ms. Shani Halfon: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Don't go away thinking that's a done deal, because it's not.

Ms. Shani Halfon: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thanks very much.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thanks to you, Ms. Halfon, for your deputation and written submission.

BOULTON AVENUE CHILDCARE CENTRE

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I now invite Ms. Schappert of the Boulton Avenue Childcare Centre to please come forward. Welcome, and please begin.

Ms. June Schappert: Thank you very much. My name is June Schappert and I am the director of Boulton Avenue Childcare Centre. Boulton Avenue Childcare Centre is a non-profit child care centre that has been around for over 25 years, and we service the families in the Broadview-Queen Street area. The children in our centre attend Dundas public school and Holy Name Catholic School. Both schools will be getting all-day learning come September 2010.

Our centre is basically supported by subsidized families, and this all-day learning is going to have a high impact on our families.

I have several questions that I feel have not been answered to date, and I was hoping that a date would be made so the families can make accommodations based on the answers to our questions. Many of my questions are geared towards the subsidized families because, like I said, we're probably 80% subsidized. These are questions that parents have asked me, and I personally have said that I don't know the answers:

(1) When my child graduates from kindergarten, can I get into the child care system again?

This question is based on the fact that extended care at the schools is only being offered to four- and five-year-olds at this time, so what happens next year when they go to grade 1?

(2) How is my subsidy being affected? Will it be carried over to the board of education or does the city carry it over? How, when and where do I apply?

(3) I am out of district from Dundas and Holy Name schools, and these schools are not accepting out-of-district children. What happens to me?

That's referring to the children who are out of district.

(4) My child will go to Holy Name, which is also a school that has all-day learning. Will there be a bus, and can my child still attend Boulton?

Unfortunately, this morning I received an email from city transportation, saying yes, there is a bus, but what's the good if I don't have a program to offer for the child?

(5) What happens on PD days, summer holidays, March break and winter holidays if extended care is not available?

(6) What will happen to my existing preschool room and the reliable, professional staff who have been with the centre for so long?

(7) Will there be funding available to renovate my site if this becomes an option?

(8) Since kindergarten is optional, can I leave my child at the daycare centre and my subsidy still continues?

And finally:

(9) When will we actually know something and will there be a date when all information will be finalized?

In summary, I would like to say that I feel parents' choices have been taken away on what they feel is best for their children, and the government of Ontario and Dr. Charles Pascal have decided for everyone.

This new bill states that four- and five-year-olds will be in a class size of 26 children, replacing the old ratio of 1 to 8 or 1 to 10 that is presently being offered at child

care centres. Children's social and emotional development needs will not necessarily be the main focus based on these ratios.

Children need a nurturing, caring environment that only a child care centre can offer. In a group size of 26 children, they will not get that proper attention that they so highly deserve at this young age. Extra hugs go a long way.

I will plead with you to continue to support the many families that rely on child care in order for families to survive in this struggling economy. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Schappert. About two minutes or more per side, beginning with Ms. Witmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I thank you for coming forward, and I guess that the questions that you've asked here are the questions that many people in the province have. In fact, I spoke to a parent today who had wanted her child just to go to half-day; the school is becoming a full-day one. She was told she could pick up her child halfway through the day, but, obviously, the child would be losing out on the program. She said, "I realize that there's no parental choice for me." She was rather disappointed. Hopefully, before too long, we'll get all this info.

Ms. June Schappert: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Mr. Flynn?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, June, for coming today and for the very practical questions. As I understand it, you have a four- or five-year-old, is that right?

Ms. June Schappert: No.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: You don't? Okay, but you're asking questions on behalf of parents who do have four- or five-year-olds?

Ms. June Schappert: On behalf of families, yes.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: In the area that you're from, you've had two schools approved: Dundas public and Holy Name.

The ratios will be 1 to 13, if I can answer that question first. You'll have two adults; where the average class size is 26, the intent is to have two adults in the room at all times. That could be a combination of ECE and teacher.

You say, "Children need a nurturing, caring environment that only a child care centre can offer." What would make you think that you couldn't get that nurturing environment within a kindergarten class?

Ms. June Schappert: The group size, the 26 children. Like I said, we're offering a 1-to-8 ratio in our centre right now, and I can't imagine some of these children going into a 2-to-26 category.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Well, that's 1 to 13.

Ms. June Schappert: They need extra care.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I agree with you on the hugs. We could all use more hugs, even us in this building from time to time.

For those parents who choose not to enlist—kindergarten is voluntary, obviously—there will be some who will decide that this isn't for them or for their child.

Ms. June Schappert: That's based on the subsidy in the city of Toronto because if you choose not to go to school, will the subsidy continue to let them stay at the daycare? So that's another issue I have with that.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Yes, I can't imagine it wouldn't, but certainly we can get some of the answers for you. These are good, practical questions that really deal with the everyday implementation of this.

Ms. June Schappert: And I deal with these daily.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a phased implementation, so it is something we'll be learning by doing a little bit on this. We're one of the first jurisdictions to go down this road, but you support the concept of full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds?

Ms. June Schappert: For some children, yes. I would say yes.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Mr. Marchese, two minutes.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you, June. Sorry; I had to be out there to do an interview.

I look at your comment here, "In a group size of 26, children will not get the proper attention." That is my fear as well. My worry is that the class size may not be adequate. In some places, they might have the adequate space to be able to accommodate 26 students to take a nap. I don't know where they're going to find that kind of space. In some child care centres, they have a wash-room facility right there. In some other places, you might have to walk farther. I'm worried about that, and I'm worried about nutritious snacks. All those things concern me, and I'm not sure I'm hearing the right answers from the government.

You talk about a class size of 26, but you heard me say that it's an average.

Ms. June Schappert: Average; it could be more.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The government is not committed to capping, and I think 26 is too many students. I really believe that. We have to get the government at least to agree to a cap, and we're not there yet. But you agree on a cap, I'm assuming. Correct?

Ms. June Schappert: Oh, for sure.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, June.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Schappert, for your deputation.

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ASSOCIATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I would now invite our next presenter to please come forward: Ms. Sousa of the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario. Welcome, and please begin.

Ms. Eduarda Sousa: Good afternoon. My name is Eduarda Sousa. I'm the executive director for the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to address you.

The Association of Early Childhood Educators is a professional association of more than 2,500 early

childhood educators and non-profit child care programs across Ontario. Our mission is to be the leader in promoting professional development and recognition of early childhood educators on behalf of children in Ontario.

The AECEO fully supports the recommendations made by the province's early learning and care adviser, Dr. Charles Pascal, in his 2009 report *With Our Best Future in Mind*, and the direction of the Ontario government to publicly fund a full-day learning program for four- and five-year-olds.

We welcome the new developments that are unfolding in our field. Among them, we support increasing public and government awareness of the importance of building strong foundational learning and supports during the early childhood years; the value of integrated services from pre-birth to adolescence; the growing need to support the diverse cultural and lifestyle choices of families of young children; and the recognition of early childhood educators as a specialized and publicly accountable profession.

It is in this capacity that we highlight our main recommendations in regard to Bill 242.

The provision of extended-day programming in conjunction with a full-day program is what allows the full-day early learning initiative to be truly seamless—one of the key recommendations of Dr. Pascal's report. Allowing a school or school board to opt out of the extended program would not only negate the benefits of a seamless day; it would leave families with poor-quality before-and-after care or none at all. Existing child-care centres will be closing their programs for four- and five-year-olds due to the full-day early learning program, so families whose board or school opted out of offering the extended-day program won't have child care as an option. Alternatively, four- and five-year-olds might be accommodated in a child care centre but placed with older children. Smaller communities and rural areas, where demand for the extended-day program may be lower, would be the most affected.

School boards must be obliged to offer the extended-day program within the guidelines set out in the early learning adviser's report. Provincial funding allocations must take low-demand situations into account so that school boards are not penalized financially. Contingencies for children who do not attend the extended day should be enacted, such as a requirement to publish the extended program curriculum and allow child care programs to operate in tandem.

The AECEO strongly believes that early childhood educators, as defined by the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007, and the registration regulations of the College of Early Childhood Educators, are skilled professionals and, in a full- and extended-day early learning program for four- and five-year-olds, are fully capable of delivering a planned and effective curriculum based on an understanding of child development and the value of play-based learning.

In order to deliver a planned and effective curriculum and support the principle of seamless early education

throughout the complete full- and extended-day period, the program will require a staff of two designated ECE positions and one teacher position. The ECE positions must be full-time, based on seven-hour days. We recommend that there be no circumstance in which a board is allowed to negotiate a lower staffing complement. Minimum requirements such as in the Day Nurseries Act should be enacted.

Our experience in the early-child-care sector has taught us that policies that allow untrained staff to work without seeking professional training or credentials will lead to programs that are not equal to others. The ministry of children and youth's issuance of director's-otherwise-approved status has resulted in a sector that now has between 20,000 to 25,000 untrained individuals working in licensed centres. These individuals are allowed to work under this policy for as long as they are employed at the same centre. There are today in Ontario individuals who have been working under this provision for as long as 20 years, and sometimes more.

This bill allows the minister to grant a letter of permission to a board to hire a non-ECE for up to one year, where no ECE is available. The role of the ECE in the early learning program is crucial. Substituting the ECE position with non-trained staff will remove the very core of what makes this program unique and result in some programs being run by two trained professionals while others have only one.

We urge the committee to include a limit on renewals of letters of permission, tied to a specific training plan and educational benchmarks for each individual to obtain the ECE training and licensing required for employment in the early learning program. Boards should be directed and funded to provide access to flexible training opportunities for these staff members. The hiring process and minimum qualifications also need to be set out, as with the letters of permission for teachers. In further support of the professionalism of early childhood educators, we recommend that there be a universal job description for ECEs issued by the Ministry of Education to all school boards.

Both the full-day early learning program and the extended-day program must be monitored based on comprehensive quality measures to ensure that programming, physical space, group sizes and ratios are consistent and based on best practices. These standards must meet Day Nurseries Act standards as a minimum.

There is no provision in the bill for the delivery of early learning program services for four- and five-year-olds on professional development days, school holidays and during the summer. There is also no requirement for boards to provide extended-day programs for children six and up. This not only makes it difficult for the licensed child care sector and school boards to plan effectively; it creates a huge challenge for families who have early learning and care needs year-round. Once the early learning program is delivered in the schools, there will no longer be a basis for providing early learning and child care for the designated age groups within child care centres.

It is not clear who will operate and run the early learning program on non-school days, or even where they will be located. As well, since the Day Nurseries Act does not apply within schools and Bill 242 refers only to school days, a huge gap in governing legislation and regulation exists in the administration of the program on non-school days. This gap not only undermines the importance of qualified staff providing professional early education for children; it undermines the government's commitment to quality education. A provision to obligate school boards to include non-school days within the early learning program must be included to protect children from having these programs operated in schoolyards and run by teenage camp counsellors, or some similar arrangement.

While we fully support the direction that we are taking for children, we are also cautious about losing the uniqueness that is early childhood education. Our members have told us that they do not want to lose the care and nurturing piece that is an integral part of their profession. They do not want to see the promotion of classrooms instead of playrooms, teaching instead of facilitating, testing instead of play process, or discovery through experimenting, trial and error or cause and effect. Early childhood educators want to become partners in an early learning program that is true to the values and spirit of what early childhood education is all about. The early learning program should incorporate the best of early childhood education through integration of the ELECT framework and the revised kindergarten program.

Unless provincial funding is provided, there will be negative impacts on the community-based child care sector as a result of moving four- and five-year-olds into schools. In order to ensure the continued viability of this sector, we recommend that the provincial government cover anticipated funding shortages by providing community-based programs with additional funding to cover the higher cost of delivering services to children zero to three years.

We trust that this committee will address these important issues in the course of its deliberations. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you very much, Ms. Sousa. Just a handful of seconds: Mr. Marchese?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A handful of seconds? Thanks very much. It was very thorough, very good. Keep up the pressure. Don't just think that you've done this submission today and they're going to listen.

Ms. Eduarda Sousa: Oh, believe me, we know.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The many questions you've raised are going to continue even once this starts in September.

Ms. Eduarda Sousa: We're up for the—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Challenge.

Ms. Eduarda Sousa: Challenge. That's right.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Very judiciously used, Mr. Marchese. Mr. Flynn?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, yes. I'd keep up the pressure on all parties, because certainly this is, I think, a watershed moment for early childhood educators to show the province what they're capable of doing if the right resources are applied to the profession.

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I really appreciate what you've said about the letters of permission, because you've explained it more clearly that that provision exists today in the teaching profession, and simply this will just mirror what the—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Mr. Flynn. Ms. Witmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much, Ms. Sousa.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you very much, Ms. Witmer, and to you, Ms. Sousa, for your deputation on behalf of the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario.

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD MATTERS COALITION TORONTO

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Now I'd invite our next presenters to please come forward, Ms. Anglin and Ms. Weigand, who I believe come to us as private citizens. Welcome. I would invite you to please begin now.

Ms. Maureen Anglin: Hello. My name is Maureen Anglin, and this is Lorna Weigand. We are the co-chairs of the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto and we would like to thank you for this opportunity to comment on this bill.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry. Middle Childhood what, again?

Ms. Maureen Anglin: Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto. We do have written documentation, if you would like.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Yes, please, we'll have it.

Ms. Maureen Anglin: Our coalition did form in 2003 due to our concern about the lack of focus on the critical developmental stages of children six to 12. Our concern was that there was a gap in services for this age group.

Our vision is that Toronto will have a comprehensive, integrated, accessible system of programs and services for all children to enhance their optimal development and to strengthen families.

Our mission is to focus on children six to 12 and their families using a community perspective. We work for systemic change through influencing public policy, advocating, partnership and network development, and supporting best practices.

Our coalition is made up of many of the key players that work with community-based programs within Toronto, and we are also open to membership from parents and other organizations.

We are pleased to see this initiative, which will bring about more collaboration and respect between both the

education and the child care sectors. I'd like to pass it over to Lorna now.

Ms. Lorna Weigand: We are generally pleased with the provincial government creating Bill 242. We would like to speak to part IX.1, extended-day programs. This is the part of Bill 242 that refers to programs for children aged six to 12.

To begin with, we'd like to draw your attention to specific sections in the bill which are of some concern to us. Subsection 259(2) says that, "Subject to the regulations, policies and guidelines made under this part, a board may also operate extended day programs in a school of the board, outside the time when junior kindergarten and kindergarten are operated in the school, for any pupils of the board to whom the board decides to provide the program."

Our concern is: On what grounds could a board be selective about which students could receive extended-day services? For example, could this allow boards to exclude students in special education classes? Could boards decide to only offer this program to children in the primary grades, up to and including grade 3? Could they only provide the program for siblings of kindergarten children?

Our concern about 260.2, which says, "A principal may delegate any of his or her duties under this act that relate to the operation of extended day programs to a vice principal or another person approved by the board": On the one hand, it might seem that supervision of the operation of the extended-day program would be provided by a vice principal or someone of that level. However, we have some concern that this supervisory role could be played by a much less experienced individual if approved by the board.

Our concerns about 260.5(1), "The minister may issue policies and guidelines respecting all aspects of the operation of extended day programs and require boards to comply with them": We would hope that the minister will—not "may"—issue policies and guidelines respecting all aspects of the operation of extended-day programs and require boards to comply with them.

There is some concern about leaving the content and objectives of an extended-day program up to the discretion of individual boards of education. There may be a greater focus on the cost of a program rather than on the benefits of the program to children and their families.

We would hope that guidelines for the program content would address the points made in Dr. Pascal's report *With Our Best Future in Mind*, and that the curriculum for the extended-day programs would be developed with the future of children in mind, ensuring that our children are healthy and secure; emotionally and socially competent; eager, confident and successful learners; and respectful of the diversity of their peers.

We would also like to see how community members, local senior students, parents and grandparents would be incorporated into the extended-day program, either as part-time staff or volunteers, to enrich and support strong community connections between the schools, students and community.

We would like to be assured that existing community-based programs can be extended and supported rather than replaced.

In Minister Dombrowsky's introductory statement in the Legislative Assembly on February 17, she stated that the return on public investment for young children is at least seven to one. We believe it would be valuable for the future of the extended-day program if the province could support further research on the particular aspects of public investment in children that provide the greatest returns. We believe that parents and the public in general would be interested in this research and that details about this research would further support this extended educational initiative.

We would also like it noted that since most of the costs of the extended-day program seem to be funded by parent fees, the extended-day program constitutes a significant parent investment rather than simply a public investment.

The next section that we want to refer to is subsection 264.1(1). Although this section refers to planning for and providing education to pupils in junior kindergarten and kindergarten, this section does not clearly indicate who will be responsible for planning the content of extended-day programs. We feel that in order for the extended-day program to contribute to the healthy development of children ages six to 12, planning for the content of these extended-day programs will be just as important as the planning for the junior kindergarten and kindergarten full-day learning. Therefore, we would like to see this planning responsibility specified in the legislation.

Finally, we understand that 2015-16 has been set as the target date for full-day learning to be available in all elementary schools in Ontario. We would like to see a similar target date being set for the availability of quality extended-day programs to be made available for all children ages six to 12 in Ontario communities.

We also believe that consideration should be given to the short title of the act, which is the final note in the act, to ensure that the extended-day programs are fully understood to be a part of this legislation. We might suggest "Full Day Early Learning and Extended Day Programming for Elementary Schools Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010."

Ms. Maureen Anglin: In summary, we applaud the government for committing to the implementation of full-day kindergarten and an extended-day program.

We also believe it is very important that community organizations are involved in the implementation of extended-day programming, as many currently run high-quality community programs for these children.

We are also concerned that there has not been extensive public discussion about the value, purpose and measurable goals of extended-day programming for six- to 12-year-olds. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you very much. About 30 seconds or so per side, beginning with Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you. If I could summarize what I heard you say, you support the concept of full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, and you think it would be really a good thing if at some point in the future we were able to extend that same way of thinking to six- to 12-year-olds.

Ms. Lorna Weigand: Our understanding in some of the reading that we have seen around the bill and within the bill indicates that there will be extended-day programming for children other than the kindergarten children, that it's part of the bill, and that's what we were a little confused with.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Flynn. Ms. Witmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much. You've raised some of the same concerns we've been hearing.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Witmer. Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you both.

Section 259 says the board "may also operate extended day programs." There's no requirement that they do so.

Ms. Lorna Weigand: That's our concern. It's put in there, but without any teeth.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Not only without any teeth, but there's no requirement that they do it.

Ms. Lorna Weigand: They're already doing that, so why is there that whole section?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Are you saying they should be required to provide them?

Ms. Lorna Weigand: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Marchese, and thanks to you, Ms. Anglin and Ms. Weigand, for your deputation and written submission.

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MS. WENDY TEED

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I'd now invite our next presenter to please come forward: Ms. Teed. Welcome, and we'll have that distributed. Yes, please begin.

Ms. Wendy Teed: Good afternoon, committee members. My name is Wendy Teed. I'm a parent. I have a B.A.Sc. in child studies from the University of Guelph, the human services management certificate from George Brown College, and almost 30 years' experience working with children and families. I currently own, operate and direct three exceptional licensed child care centres in a rural community within the Hamilton-Wentworth region.

My involvement with Bill 242 began June 15, 2009, when I read the just-released document *With Our Best Future in Mind* by Dr. Charles Pascal, Ontario's special adviser on early learning.

The next evening, I wrote a responsive document, citing my immediate concerns with the proposed plan, as the practical application of a myriad of Dr. Pascal's

recommendations had neither been identified nor appropriately addressed.

We all have dreams. With *Our Best Future in Mind* is one of Dr. Pascal's. Can it be realized in the manner that he appears to envision it, with the passing of Bill 242? I believe not. This bill does not provide the detailed support necessary to successfully execute his ideas.

When he stated that "Children are remarkably similar at birth, but by age four, the gaps are already dramatic," I became anxious that Dr. Pascal does not appear to possess a sound knowledge of early childhood development. I then became distressed at the thought that those ideas are to form the foundation for changes to our current education and child care systems.

Dr. Pascal states, "We need a common programming framework for all of Ontario's early childhood settings." Can we not maintain parental choice in child care programming? Should ECEs not have an opportunity to choose to apply their skills in an environment with a philosophy that they truly believe in, rather than one that is mandated by the current government?

What will the role of the teacher and ECE be within this program framework? Will they work co-operatively in the same classroom, given the historic divide between these two disciplines? Although Dr. Pascal assumes that everyone involved will, in the best interests of children, play nice in the sandbox together, this may not be a realistic expectation.

As time moved forward, it became clear to me that (1) the words of Dr. Pascal were to be seen as the key to the direction for change; (2) his plan would have immediate and long-term effects on child care; (3) questions were not being posed publicly; and, sadly, (4) they were even being discouraged.

ECEs were and continue to be directed from all sides to make this work. I am not a person to stand idly by and watch what I see as the destruction of a very valuable system being blindly replaced by another.

My views were then published in the *Hamilton Spectator*. They included:

How can shifting from a class size cap of 20 to an average of 26 be considered a positive step toward the future?

How can a change in ratios be seen as a "pro" argument for full-day learning, or FDL, when it reflects a 1-to-8 or 1-to-10 ratio in a licensed daycare and moves to 1-to-13-plus in a school?

How can managing a group size with an average of 26 JK/SKs be preferable to a maximum group size of 16, 20 or 24, as per the *Day Nurseries Act*, or DNA?

How can anyone realistically expect children, some as young as three years and eight months of age, to function optimally in a school classroom five full days per week?

How can this plan make life easier for busy parents when (1) child care services may only be provided 188 days out of the year; (2) parents of children who are currently bused to and from half-day JK/SK programs and who opt not to participate in FDL will now be

responsible for their child's transportation home or to another child care option, one way daily, Monday through Friday; and (3) parents are being given a ballpark figure for extended programming, or EP, anywhere from \$15 to \$25 per day?

How can this plan, which will initially cost taxpayers millions of dollars, be put into action in a year that has a projected "unprecedented deficit" of \$24.7 billion? The estimated cost of FDL is presented as just shy of \$1 billion annually, but the IMFC states that realistically, \$1.8 billion is the appropriate cost estimate.

Why should taxpayers spend billions to retrofit schools when there are already wonderful licensed early learning spaces currently in operation?

Why is the Ministry of Education adamant that school boards run EPs rather than partner with present services, when a number of school board officials have already publicly stated that they are not pleased with being given this responsibility?

How can Mr. McGuinty boast the addition of 20,000 jobs for ECEs with Bill 242 when we've already seen announced the closing of seven municipally operated centres, plus two after-school programs in Windsor and one YMCA in Brantford, in anticipation of its passing? Sadly, these closures are only the beginning.

As Bill 242 continued to barrel through government processes, I enlightened my daycare parents in a detailed newsletter, asking a number of questions: "Are you aware that although licensed child care services must comply with the DNA, which represents minimum requirements for licensing, the EPs, as a result of Bill 242, will be exempt from the DNA?" The passing of Bill 242 will permit individuals who are not trained in daycare service delivery to be able to do so without meeting the minimum requirements that those who are knowledgeable in this area must satisfy. How are parents going to be assured that quality care will be provided to children accessing the EPs?

I have posed this question to the new early years division and was told by the gentleman on the other end of the telephone that he would "get right back" to me on this. That was many weeks ago, and as I have not been further contacted in this regard, I assume that quality assurance with regard to EPs is not obvious to those actively involved in its planning. Has it even been a consideration? Will you be able to sleep at night not being certain of the answer to that question? Do you recognize that EPs may be staffed by persons other than ECEs? Do you understand that once education takes over the care of children of 3.8 to five years, current licensed child care services may not be able to financially sustain themselves to provide daycare to children from zero to 3.8 years? Do you accept that under Bill 242, 26 children in a JK/SK classroom is an average, and that the actual number of students could be greater? I was witness to a board information session where it was stated that if a child required a space in a JK/SK classroom and there were already 30 students present, this child would not be denied service.

Does the passing of Bill 242 mark the beginning of the implementation of all of Dr. Pascal's ideas, which see education presiding over licensed child care for children zero to 12 years of age, rendering the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, or MCYS, redundant for this purpose? When I have questioned education as to the involvement of MCYS in this process, I've been advised that the ministry is in collaboration with MCYS. To what degree? How often? Answers to these questions are not easily accessed.

Are you aware that the proposed regulatory amendments to the DNA are the direct result of the passing of Bill 242? Do you understand the magnitude of these changes? They will affect ratios of adults to children, age groupings and group sizes, physical plant and equipment, and capacity and private home daycare.

Martha Friendly of Toronto's Childcare Resource and Research Unit states: "If the proposed changes go through, Ontario would be the first province to lower child care standards." Will you be satisfied knowing that you chose to take an active role in reducing the minimum requirements for licensed child care settings?

Mr. McGuinty affirms that FDL will give youngsters "a better chance of finishing high school, going on to post-secondary education and getting a good job." Are these realistic expectations of having children as young as 44 months of age attend school full days, Monday through Friday, with education beginning to take over the entire child care system? Although supporters of FDL would like to have us all convinced that its introduction will yield positive, long-term results, the National Post reports, with respect to longitudinal studies: "In every study, the initial advantages provided by full-day kindergarten diminish over time" and that the debate among experts is "whether they dwindle all the way to zero, or merely to near insignificance."

With the passing of Bill 242, it is expected that 35,000 JK/SK students will partake in FDL this fall. How can this be successfully implemented five months from now when those who are being given this responsibility are publicly stating, "We have more questions right now than answers"?

In March 1996 I began to care for two children in my home, and I now own, operate and direct three exceptional licensed child care centres serving 89 children at any one time aged zero to 12 years. I possess a solid understanding from experience as to the recipe for success in developing and executing superior children's programs. The following ingredients are critical: (1) detailed planning, (2) careful introduction and implementation, (3) ongoing review and reflective practice, (4) modifications based on number 3, and (5) repeating the cycle, ongoing, from items one through four inclusive.

Bill 242 is extremely lacking in all of these components. This afternoon I implore you to decrease the velocity with which this legislation appears to be moving and to seriously consider all the potential effects of the passing of Bill 242 by reviewing in detail all of the issues put forth to this committee. As you address the latter,

please recognize that the effects are far-reaching. For example, there are current licensed child care centres in buildings all across this province where their owners may rely heavily upon the rental income that the daycare service provides. The two of mine presently operating on church property, I anticipate, are two of many.

Understand that the popularity of a licensed child care operation can assist in maintaining the viability of a school to the presence of out-of-catchment students. I believe that Millgrove is not the only community to which this situation applies.

Should you consider amending Bill 242, as proposed to you last week by the YMCA, to allow boards to partner with local, private child care services deemed non-profit, I urge you to recognize that this action will have a detrimental effect on the continuation of exceptional commercial operations such as mine.

To demonstrate that quality child care service is not equated with any financial designation, I have provided for your review in your package today a visual representation of Millgrove's licensed daycare operation and a personal invitation to attend these centres and witness first-hand best child care practice in action. Then you will fully understand, if you do not already, why I strongly recommend that any amendment of this kind should include the ability of boards to "partner with any licensed local child care service" and not just those designated as non-profit.

In closing, at the Sanderson Centre in Brantford, Ontario this past December, I witnessed Dr. Pascal state that "children are one third of our population and all of our future." Our future is now in your hands.

Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Teed. We have 10 to 15 seconds per side. Probably, on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you, not only for your deputation but also for your very elegant presentation, which I'm sure we will all read at leisure. Thank you very much for attending today.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I would now invite our next presenter, Ms. Gilligan, to please come forward. Is Ms. Gilligan present? Is Ms. Mercer available? Is Ms. Rullo available? Ms. Carrol Sceviour?

I think we're going to have to recess the committee for 10 minutes.

The committee recessed from 1504 to 1505.

CITIZENS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): The committee is back in session. I will now invite Mr. Dobson-Smith of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights. I invite you to begin.

Mr. Robert Dobson-Smith: My name is Robert Dobson-Smith, and I'm the president of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights in Canada. Thank you for the opportunity to present our concerns today. I will be

bringing up some matters that have not been addressed thus far.

In a Toronto Star article dated June 15, 2009, Charles Pascal was quoted as saying that up to one quarter of Ontario children arrive in Grade 1 severely behind their peers while another 30% have difficulties that have not been identified. While we support practical educational solutions, we are also concerned that today's trend for dealing with these types of concerns has become the medication of our youth. We spoke with a teacher in Toronto who is concerned about these children being in full-day kindergarten and daycare becoming "institutionalized."

More than 20 million children worldwide are labelled with a psychiatric disorder that no diagnostic test can confirm. Prescribing psychotropic drugs for a disease that doesn't exist, neurologist Sydney Walker III wrote in *The Hyperactivity Hoax*, is a tragedy because "masking children's symptoms merely allows their underlying disorders to continue and, in many cases, to become worse."

Informed consent has two components: knowing what is actually wrong with you and knowing the positive and negative effects of any remedy that will be used to address the correct medical diagnosis. In a letter from a prominent Toronto constitutional lawyer, we were told that "lack of an informed consent constitutes a criminal assault and a civil battery." The parents need to be made aware that they should seek a full medical exam before any psychiatric remedy is undertaken.

1510

According to Dr. William Carey, a highly respected pediatrician at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, "The current ADHD formulation, which makes the diagnosis when a certain number of troublesome behaviours are present and other criteria met, overlooks the fact that these behaviours are probably usually normal."

We had a concerned parent of a child come to us after the school had sent her a letter indicating her child needed to be assessed. Among the behaviours listed as problematic were snowball throwing, jumping from tall equipment, sliding on ice and running in the hall. Joe Turtel, author of *Public Schools, Public Menace*, tells parents, "What child does not have ADHD? Having to sit in boring classes for six to eight hours a day, what child would not want to squirm, fidget, run around, not pay attention or escape any way that they can? These are the kinds of things that normal, energetic children want to do when they are bored or frustrated, as any mother will tell you."

Dr. Mary Ann Block, who has helped thousands of children safely come off psychotropic drugs, says, "Many doctors don't do physical exams before prescribing psychiatric drugs." Children see a doctor, but the doctor does not do a physical exam or look for any health or learning problems before giving the child an ADHD diagnosis and a prescription drug.

This is not how I was taught to practise medicine. In my medical education, I was taught to do a complete history and physical exam. I was taught to consider all possible underlying causes of the symptoms.

In September 2005, the Oregon Health and Science University Evidence-Based Practice Center published a review of 2,287 studies—virtually every study ever conducted on ADHD drugs—and found that no trials prove the effectiveness of these drugs. There is a lack of evidence that they could improve academic performance, risky behaviours, social achievements etc.

In February 2006, the Food and Drug Administration's Drug Safety and Risk Management Advisory Committee urged the FDA to issue its strongest "black box" warning for stimulants because of the risk of heart attack, stroke and sudden death. This was among young children. In August, the FDA ordered stimulant manufacturers to strengthen their labelling to warn that the drugs can cause suppression of growth, psychosis, bipolar illness, aggression, and heart attacks and strokes.

An August 2001 study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded that Ritalin is chemically similar to cocaine. Nadine Lambert, Ph.D., professor and director of the school psychology program at the University of California, Berkeley, conducted a study of adults who took stimulants when they were children. Lambert found that these children were more likely to start smoking or using cocaine and to continue these habits into adulthood. She believes children's brains become sensitized to stimulants, and this sensitization predisposes the children to later cocaine abuse.

A mother from Toronto called our office regarding her concern that her child was diagnosed with ADHD. She felt that he was normal, but he had been prescribed Ritalin. She went to the pharmacy. When she asked for the compendium to see the drug reactions, she decided not to give it to her six-year-old; she was very concerned about that. Instead, she gave him a vitamin C tablet before he went to school each day. The teacher would ask the child if his mother had given him his pill and he would reply, "Yes." After three weeks, the special education teacher and the principal called the mother and said that he was doing so much better on the medication.

There's quite an incentive to have children assessed and diagnosed with conditions. We deal specifically with cases which we consider to be psychiatric abuse cases where there has not been a proper medical examination done and there has not been a proper assessment. When these are undertaken with a competent physician, usually many other things are wrong with this child, from anemia to being a genius.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Dobson. A minute per side, beginning with Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much for the presentation. I'm not sure how it connects to what we're—

Mr. Robert Dobson-Smith: It does connect to section 12.1. You have criminal risk involving children. The criminal risk here is the fact that in the school system there is actually quite a bit of pressure that's brought to bear on parents to—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, I appreciate it. I just want to tell you that you raise a lot of good points here. It

would be great if we had a proper forum for these discussions because I actually agree with much of what you say in this paper, and it's unfortunate that this may not be the appropriate forum.

Thank you very much. We agree. Hopefully it will come up again in other discussions, because we should be dealing with that as well.

Mr. Robert Dobson-Smith: Okay. Do you think you could maybe initiate a forum? I think it's very much needed. A lot of—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Marchese. Mr. Flynn?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I hear you and I agree.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Sir, just so I understand, the Citizens Commission on Human Rights Canada exists on its own now?

Mr. Robert Dobson-Smith: Yes, it's a separately incorporated entity in the province of Ontario. It was originally established by the Church of Scientology in 1969.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: But now it operates on its own.

Mr. Robert Dobson-Smith: Well, no. We are a separate entity in this province, yes.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'll tell you, I appreciate the input. Certainly some of the things that we've heard around the province as I have been travelling with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions would back up some of the things. So I'll make sure that this is transferred to that committee and that they get the full advantage of reading this as well.

1520

Mr. Robert Dobson-Smith: We actually have some DVDs there that are extremely informative and that provide a lot of information.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Ms. Witmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I appreciate your presentation. Are you concerned about the impact of full-day learning, that more children are going to be labelled?

Mr. Robert Dobson-Smith: Yes. We've spoken to teachers we know, and they have told us that when you have a child who has been in school for 10 or 12 hours a day—some of these kids are going to be dropped off at 7:30 in the morning and picked up at 6 o'clock at night—they're going to be running around like—especially after their naps, they'll be doing lots of things. Notes will be taken, and assessments evolve from these notes, as we've looked through school files. Over the last 30 years of the cases that we've handled, you always find that the notations begin in kindergarten, and then by the time they're in grade 1, they're assessed with ADHD or something, and then they start being medicated—or even earlier, because the College of Physicians and Surgeons at one point said that they're able to medicate anyone now regardless of the fact that the drugs were not recommended by the pharmaceutical companies for anyone under the age of six. But they said, "Well, we think"—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thanks to you, Mr. Dobson-Smith, for your deputation and the DVD, as well as for coming forward earlier than scheduled.

I'd now invite our next presenter to please come forward: Ms. Gilligan, if you are here. If not, Ms. Mercer? Ms. Rullo? Ms. Kelly and Ms. Sceviour? Ms. Hermiston?

JACKMAN COMMUNITY DAY CARE

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Is anyone here from the Jackman Community Day Care? Please come forward, Ms. Spreitzer, Ms. Atkinson and Ms. Deschamps. You are testifying, I guess, an hour and a half earlier than scheduled.

As you've seen, you have 10 minutes in which to make the full presentation. The time remaining will be distributed evenly amongst the parties. I'd invite you to please begin now.

Ms. Mary Deschamps: We're from Jackman Community Day Care, which is in the Broadview and Danforth area.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): If you could just identify yourselves individually as well, please.

Ms. Mary Deschamps: My name is Mary Deschamps. I am a mother. I'm also a grandmother. I also have the legal guardianship of my five-year-old granddaughter, who goes to both Jackman Community Day Care and Jackman school. She's five years old, and she has been with us since she was a year old.

I used to walk by Jackman on the way downtown to my very busy and very important job down at Bay and King and didn't think very much about Jackman, except that it was brick and mortar and was part of our wonderful community. My life has changed a lot since then.

My life has changed so dramatically, and so has my view of the school. I'm now semi-retired. I'm on the daycare board, and I'm passionate about the type of learning and cultural environment Annika will have. I'm enthusiastic about Dr. Pascal's vision of the school as the central hub for families. In my opinion, there has always been too much fragmentation with all the community agencies and institutions working very diligently, very hard, but in their deep and closed-off silos.

I would also like to mention that I have over 25 years as the most senior human resource person within several large organizations. In many ways, what is happening to our current daycare is analogous to a corporate merger. When mergers fail, it's because they have inadequate preparation, the communication is woefully weak or non-existent, rumour vines runs rampant, and the acquired company—which, in our opinion, or the way we think of it, is the current daycares that are being acquired—we have concern that they will be treated shabbily with little or no concern for their welfare.

Please allow me to describe Jackman Community Day Care in numbers. We have 130 children in total, with 24 of those children in kindergarten. There are approximately 300 children on our waiting list. There are 10

early childhood educators with an average tenure of 8.6 years, with the longest-serving ECE—early childhood educator—having 19 years of valued service to our children.

With that preamble, please allow me to list my concerns:

(1) Please don't throw out the proverbial baby with the bathwater. This daycare has existed for 25 years. It is highly valued and has deep and abiding roots in my community. It is completely integrated within the school structure. Yes, obviously, from an organizational viewpoint, the JK/SK needs to be centralized under one management, the principal of the school, but why do we have to totally dismantle a functioning, working, excellent example of daycare integrated into the schools?

(2) Why can't the principal work with our daycare to employ those staff that he would like to retain? Why do these valued daycare professionals have to go beg for their job in a long queue of other early childhood educators? They're part of our community, and we want them to be treated well.

(3) Who is going to fill the quality care our children need for preschool, lunch, post-school, PA days, school vacations including Christmas, March break and summer? Bill 242 does nothing to guarantee full-time coverage for working parents. Surely there must be some way to use the existing daycare staff to work in coordination with the TDSB to fulfill the need of our families for quality daycare within our school.

(4) Our principal works long days now, and he will have the responsibility for taking on this new venture without any clear strategy for the successful management of it. We have two full-time administrators for our 130 children. I'll say that again: two full-time administrators for our 130 children. These two women are smart, qualified and educated. They ensure that our daycare is well managed. Again, why are these terrific people not being considered as part of the plan to not only ensure an effective transition to the new system, but to also provide administrative support for the ongoing success in our school?

(5) Last but not least, there's abundant concern about how the early childhood educators will be treated once the whole new venture is up and running. We want them to be a full and equal partner in the management of the new full-day learning. Our ECEs have a great deal of skill to complement the teachers' knowledge. Please ensure that they are not relegated to the "support-the-teacher" position, wherein they are the ones solely responsible for bathroom breaks—of which there are many—cleanup, and yard duty. This will require a great deal of attention by those charged with the success of this new and extremely exciting venture.

Ms. Katrina Atkinson: I'm Katrina Atkinson, and like you, I wear many colourful hats. Hat 1: I'm mama to my five-year-old, Emma. Hat 2: wife to a busy corporate and securities lawyer. Hat 3: practising mixed-media artist. Hat 4: I'm honoured to wear the president's hat in my service, along with a dynamic team of parent

volunteers and management, to the board of directors for the highly regarded Jackman Community Day Care.

I am grateful to briefly share, on behalf of our daycare membership, the following three scenarios we are currently exploring in response to Bill 242.

Scenario 1: We relocate. Full-day learning at Jackman will see the end of our time within the school. Where do we go? We'd have to adjust our services to care for infants up to three years. We'd need appropriately trained staff. Would our current staff follow, would they retrain or take a pay cut? Costs: Would there be grant monies for this? Do we have such funds, and should we be setting up a contingency fund?

Scenario 2: We close. When is the opportune time? The effect on our families: What options will they have? If rumours of possible closure spread, will parents leave early? How will this affect the daily running of our centre? Staff retention bonuses: What are they based on, and can we afford them if families leave? Should we create a retention fund now? Can we help our staff secure new positions? How can we ensure that our ECEs are treated fairly and with dignity, and that unions recognize the seniority of our ECEs who have been working in early child care for their entire careers?

Scenario 3 would be ideal: We partner with Jackman public school in delivering full-day learning. Can we get detailed reports from other schools in the community, describing their full-day learning experience in order that we plan accordingly? To address space issues, should we be lobbying for an extension to Jackman itself? How can we maintain our current staff, since they are integral to maintaining the community we've worked so hard, over many years, to build? Are grants available to aid with this transition?

In closing, the verbs "link" and "integrate," along with "community," figure largely in the descriptions and explanations that detail the thinking and process in which full-day learning, according to the recommendations of Dr. Pascal, is to be realized, starting this very September. We started thinking and planning long ago and are really worried about the grave lack of information and communication our community has received thus far. Full-day learning is not to be a politically driven or union-sanctioned endeavour, but an authentic one, where real people are challenged to be genuine in their efforts to work together to unite our existing child care communities. It is this approach that we embrace.

Thank you for your time.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you very much. We have about 30 seconds or so per side, beginning with Mr. Flynn.

1530

Ms. Donna Spreitzer: Is there time for—what's the time?

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Yes, you have two and a half minutes or so.

Ms. Donna Spreitzer: Okay. That's what I was hoping.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Please, go ahead if you have more remarks.

Ms. Donna Spreitzer: Thank you. My name is Donna Spreitzer, and I have been the executive director at Jackman Community Day Care for seven years. Non-profit child care has been the backbone of child care in Ontario. For decades, non-profit child care has been the primary provider of quality care.

This bill has the potential to completely destroy non-profit child care already located in schools. The bill makes clear that school boards would not be able to contract out to existing partners; they may only contract out to other boards. But Jackman Community Day Care has been a successful partner for 25 years. What is the point of dismantling an already-existing integral part of the community, if only to replace it with something that is, on paper, similar, but in reality, altogether different?

My major fear of Bill 242 is that it will effectively force our daycare to shut its doors. All of my staff, staff who have put their hearts and souls into feeding the mouths and minds of children at Jackman school, will be forced to work elsewhere. If they do choose to work for the school board, I've been told it's unlikely that they'll ever be placed back at Jackman. If they choose to work as an ECE outside of a school, they will have to retrain to work with children aged zero to three at a substantial pay cut as compared to the union counterparts working at the school board. This two-tiered ECE phenomenon will create a much-divided profession.

Our recommendation is in keeping with Charles Pascal's report, where he states unequivocally that "non-profit providers ... may continue to operate licensed child care in accordance with current program standards" and that school boards will be able to contract out with community partners. I see no provisions in Bill 242 that will allow our ECE staff to transition into full-day learning while still being employed at Jackman Community Day Care. I see no ability for our daycare to continue to provide before- and after-school care for Jackman families. We will not be able to continue to operate.

We support school-based child care in all schools, but please don't needlessly reinvent the wheel. I urge you to utilize existing child care centres. In schools that don't yet have child care, then by all means, let school boards start and run them. But leave child care in the hands of the already-existing community partners. To do otherwise will completely undermine existing child care centres and ultimately see their demise and a downfall of non-profit child- and family-centred daycare throughout Ontario. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you very much, ladies, for your precision-timed remarks. I thank Ms. Spreitzer, Ms. Atkinson and Ms. Deschamps for coming forward on behalf of Jackman Community Day Care centres as well as for coming forward earlier than scheduled.

TORONTO COALITION
FOR BETTER CHILD CARE

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Are there any individuals who are scheduled to testify before the social policy committee, who have not already done so, here?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Yes? And you are?

Ms. Jane Mercer: Jane Mercer. I'm scheduled at 3:40.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Please come forward. Welcome, Ms. Mercer, and I invite you to please begin now.

Ms. Jane Mercer: Good afternoon. Thank you very much. My name is Jane Mercer. I'm the executive coordinator of the Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care. We are a network that supports close to 20,000 families in non-profit child care programs across the city of Toronto. Our members also include licensed home child care providers, family resource programs, welfare agencies and children's services organizations. Thank you for giving us all the opportunity to speak to your bill this afternoon.

We applaud your government's initiative to move forward with early learning in Ontario. This is long overdue; Ontario has lagged behind several other provinces in Canada and many European countries. But now, we hope, we are moving forward for children and young families in a manner that can make Ontarians proud.

We know and you know that it would be ineffective and a colossal waste of taxpayer dollars to simply plonk a new program such as early learning for fours and fives on top of a mix of other early learning programs. We must bring all the programs that currently exist into a child and family service system that closes the gaps and offers a continuum of services for children from birth to age 12 and ensure that they all flourish.

We urge you to keep an open mind as you listen to the ideas put before you on how best to deliver early learning in Ontario, including a full and extended day and strong child and family centres that really meet the needs of our diverse communities, communities such as our aboriginal communities, our high-needs communities, our new immigrant communities and so many for whom the conventional school approach is just not working.

During the last provincial election, Dalton McGuinty promised full-day learning for fours and fives. He promised us that full-day learning would be new money; that the child care sector would keep any savings that arose from implementing full-day learning; that full-day learning would free up spaces for younger children; and that full-day learning would make child care more affordable for younger children. Dr. Charles Pascal provided a road map for your government to use to build a comprehensive system of early learning and care that does all of these things. You have heard voices from every corner of the province that have supported an integrated, comprehensive system of early learning and child care for all Ontario children, from infants to 12 years of age.

Our concerns, which we know you have also heard from around the province, arise from the fact that so far, this government is only moving forward with one piece of the vision. Now, we know that you have to start somewhere; we appreciate that. But this limited piece is actu-

ally putting all of our other services for children and families at risk.

Our learning and child care system is so vulnerable. Early learning and child care has gone 15 years without an adjustment for inflation. Pay equity payments in the proxy sector just stopped being funded in 2006. The vast majority of our child care programs are not able to give their child care staff a pension, no matter how many years they've worked, and now, full-day learning for fours and fives is going to be one more funding pressure that could very easily be the last straw.

Please let me reiterate: We know that this is a new program and we know you have to start somewhere, but we cannot afford to lose one dollar, one child care space or one child care subsidy, not when we already have thousands of parents who desperately need the care for their children and just simply can't find a space or can't afford it.

In Toronto, parents pay \$10,000, \$12,000, up to \$18,000 a year for a child care space. Our waiting list for child care subsidies, currently around 16,000, is going to soar with the demand for new early learning programs. Thousands of parents already cannot find a space in child care, yet centres are going to close.

As you move forward, you have to make sure that it is part of a much broader, comprehensive package that really supports families and early learning for young children. Failure to do so will actually not build you an early learning system for fours and fives that you can be proud of. Instead, it will decimate the existing child care system that we have. Instead of getting more children into quality care, we will have fewer children with access.

We really want to commend the Ministry of Education's early years division for their hard work in the past six months and in the first six months of their existence. We know they have been creating not just a new program, but a new division. They have been communicating with the school boards, the municipalities and the community. And even if you don't have all the answers, we believe you've been listening.

To the Ministry of Children and Youth, we want to say that we know you have the very difficult job of trying to hold the pieces together in this child care sector and that that can be much harder than building something new. But is there nothing that you could say to reassure your very scared municipal and community partners who are reeling with the insecurity and uncertainty brought on by full-day learning? The silence has been nothing short of alarming. You could hear a pin drop, and you will certainly hear every single time a child care program closes.

We urge you to ensure that both ministries are working together towards a comprehensive system of early learning for children from zero to 12 that builds on the great programs that we already have and gives Ontarians an early learning system we can all be proud of.

Can you tell me my time?

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): You have about three minutes and 20 seconds left.

1540

Ms. Jane Mercer: I'm good.

These are our recommendations:

(1) The program must be funded properly, right up to 6 o'clock, enough for a high-quality program with fair remuneration for all staff and full-time jobs across the sectors.

(2) You must provide more subsidies so that the thousands of fours and fives who will want and need to access the extended day are not denied access and left languishing on yet another waiting list, and so that the younger children don't actually get less access to child care as subsidies are sucked up by fours and fives and our child care programs flounder and fold.

(3) You need to feed the children throughout the day, because all the research tells us that children can't learn—they can't even behave—when they're hungry. We know that too many families in this province are not able to provide a healthy lunch and nutritious snacks to last a four-year-old for 10 hours, and to expect that four-year-old to manage her own food—her little lunch and her couple of snacks throughout the day—is totally unreasonable and uncaring.

(4) Run all of your early learning programs from 7:30 until 6 for 52 weeks of the year, because working parents do not get 12 weeks' vacation.

(5) Provide the resources to ensure that all your early learning programs, including the extended day, are inclusive programs and welcome children with special needs, allowing them to reach their full potential.

(6) Protect the space in our schools currently occupied by early learning and child care programs and make sure that the school boards have the capacity to make that space available free of charge. These programs are a vital component in a successful early learning system, and in Toronto, we are coming horrendously close to losing some of them as a result of rents charged by schools.

(7) Earmark more space to ensure that every school with an early learning program and extended day has the capacity for a new child and family centre in the future.

(8) Move towards base funding for non-profit child care centres so that child care fees do not skyrocket as the fours and fives leave.

(9) Provide capital funding to allow schools to expand without squeezing out early learning and child care centres and to allow our child care programs to renovate for younger age groups.

(10) Provide the transitional funding to see that the early learning and child care sector through this time of significant change is able to modify their programs and survive another day.

Those are our top 10. Thank you, and good luck. We know that together, we can build Ontario a tremendous early learning system. We look forward to working with you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Mercer. On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank you for your deputation today on behalf of the Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL SOCIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I'd now invite our next presenters, if they are available: Ms. Rullo of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association.

Ms. Stephanie Rullo: I'm Ms. Rullo.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Rullo. Just before you begin, is Ms. Gilligan present? Fair enough.

Please be seated, Ms. Rullo, on behalf of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association. Welcome. You've seen the protocol. I invite you to please begin now.

Ms. Stephanie Rullo: Great. Good afternoon. My name is Stephanie Rullo and I am here representing the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association on behalf of our executive director, Kira Heineck, who unfortunately became ill today.

The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association represents the 47 consolidated municipal service managers and district social service administration boards from across the province who are responsible for managing and administering human services throughout the province. Our association promotes policy development and program delivery in the areas of early learning and child care, employment support services, income assistance, social housing, and homelessness prevention.

As government partners with the province, OMSSA and the municipal service system managers whom we represent are pleased to present here today our support for Bill 242, which directly reflects our belief that investing in the people of Ontario makes sense. Ontario's new early learning program, which Bill 242 will help to bring to reality, is one such investment.

We generally support Bill 242 because it facilitates an important step towards giving our children the opportunity to succeed and providing parents with more opportunities to enter the workforce while their children are in quality early learning environments. We support this bill because it facilitates an important step toward creating a strong and healthy social infrastructure for our province.

As the provincial association for municipal service system managers for early learning and child care and as the Ministry of Education's clearly identified planning partner in this new prenatal-to-12 child and family service system, OMSSA supports the new direction for school boards to provide full-day-learning programming for four- and five-year-old children in every school for the standard 9 a.m.-to-3:30 p.m. school day and a standard 10-month school year. We also support subsection 259, which requires boards to operate extended day programs for pupils enrolled in early learning programs.

We support the language that now allows the provincial government to enter into financial agreements with municipalities to enable fee subsidy funding to flow properly from the Ministry of Education to municipal service managers and to families, and we support the new

articulated role for the early childhood educators within early learning classrooms and within a school board structure.

We urge the provincial Legislature to pass Bill 242 into law to allow municipalities and school boards to continue their collaborative work on behalf of children and families in Ontario.

Looking ahead, OMSSA would like to take this opportunity to outline some of our current considerations for this committee and the government looking forward to the implementation of full-day learning in Ontario. Our submission explores this area in depth, and I would like to raise a few of our key points here today.

The early learning adviser's report articulated a clear service system management role for our municipalities in a new prenatal-to-12 child and family service system. Nothing in Bill 242, however, formally enshrines the service system management role, and we strongly recommend that the legislation be amended to formally recognize municipalities as service system managers. We ask for this amendment because despite the best efforts of the Ministry of Education to recommend to school boards to work closely with municipalities, our experience at the local level shows uneven collaboration between school boards and municipal service managers.

There's a differential experience across Ontario because a municipal role is not established in legislation and collaboration is not mandated. There is no duty to cooperate among municipal service managers and school boards like there is among teachers and early childhood educators.

OMSSA can play an important role in assisting in communities where collaboration is not coming as easily. We propose to work with the Ministry of Education to identify and share best practices across communities and are happy to work with school board associations. Solidifying this relationship in the legislation will ensure there is a clear direction for long-term partnership between school boards and municipal service managers and allow community planning processes to proceed more smoothly and consistently across the province.

Bill 242 legislation allows the government to enter in financial agreements with the municipalities to enable fee subsidy funding to flow properly from the Ministry of Education to municipal service managers and to families. We strongly believe municipal service managers and only municipal service managers should be given responsibility for the administration of fee subsidies for the extended day portion of the early learning program. Municipal service managers are unmatched in experience and expertise in administering fee subsidies for families in need. While the proposed legislation refers to other parties who might be eligible to administer the subsidy program, we believe this language should be amended to restrict fee subsidy administration to municipal service managers alone.

OMSSA supports the requirement of subsection 259(1) that boards must provide extended-day programming. We also note that subsection 259(2) permits boards

to operate extended-day programs for other pupils of the board. OMSSA believes this language in these sections must be strengthened to make mandatory the extended-day programming for all children ages four to 12. Providing the extended day for all children will be more cost-effective and allow some of the hurdles of providing it only for four- and five-year-olds to be overcome.

We further ask that the language of the legislation be strengthened to mandate all boards to provide full-day programming for the entire 12 months and not just for the 10-month school year. Providing a full year of programming makes logistical sense for parents and children and financial sense for boards.

Our final point focuses on the complete absence of policy direction about children with special needs and how these needs will be accommodated within the early learning program. Nothing in Bill 242 speaks to the obligation of boards to provide services to children with special needs, yet this program is set to begin in a few months. Support must be in place by September 1, 2010. This is not a detail that we can afford to let unfold as full-day learning begins. How will school boards support children with special needs? Will the array of community services that these children currently receive through their child care centres be similarly available in school-based learning programs? Will school boards have to draw on their already overextended internal resources?

1550

There must be clear articulation about the requirements to serve children with special needs. It is incumbent upon all the relevant ministries—education, children and youth services and health and long-term care together—to develop a clear policy and funding framework for ensuring that children with special needs are appropriately served within the new early learning program. In particular, we emphasize that there must be clearly mandated expectations for school boards to provide the same level of services as children receive in community-based child care settings.

It will be unfair for children to lose the opportunity to receive services just because they are in a school during the day. It will be unfair for families to have to choose between non-school-based child care, where they know they will receive special needs services, or a school-based early learning program, where the service capacity is uncertain. Without such clarity and without sustainable resourcing for school boards and community agencies to provide these services, our most vulnerable children will lose out on the opportunity to grow and learn in early learning programs. The result will be an inevitable segregation of special needs children in non-school-based child care settings and out of the school-based early learning programs.

We further note that children with special needs will require support during the extended portion of the day, as well. A contradiction arises, however, because of the differential language in Bill 242. While all children have a right to attend the school-day portion of early learning, no such right exists for an extended day. Again, there is a

legislative and policy vacuum where these children are concerned. The imperative must be for continuity of care for the most vulnerable children in our communities for the entire day. We urge all parties involved—the Standing Committee on Social Policy, the ministries of education, children and youth services and health and long-term care—to ensure that all children are supported in this new world of early learning.

In conclusion, our support for Bill 242 must be framed by the clear recognition that Bill 242 is an important step, but just the first step. The prenatal-to-12 child and family service system is far bigger than just four- and five-year-old children attending these new programs next year. Only 15% of these children will even be eligible for early learning this fall and, in the long term, thousands of children from age zero to three and their school-aged siblings will remain in some form of non-school-based care.

The permanent addition of the \$63.5 million in last week's budget is welcomed and will ensure that subsidized child care spaces as well as funding for special needs children continue. As we make the transition to full-day learning, we remind the committee that all children and parents must be supported with sustainable funding that allows them to choose their early learning and child care experiences.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Rullo. I'd like to thank you on behalf of the committee for your deputation on behalf of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association.

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I understand that representatives of the Ontario Federation of Labour are present. You are welcome. Please come forward. Yes, we'll distribute copies of your remarks, as well. Welcome, Ms. Kelly.

Ms. Carrol Anne Sceviour: Unfortunately, Ms. Kelly has been held up—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): And Ms. Sceviour.

Ms. Carrol Anne Sceviour: Sceviour—very good.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Merci. You have 10 minutes in which to make your presentation. Please begin.

Ms. Carrol Anne Sceviour: I'd like to thank this committee for allowing us to present today. I know for the past three days—two days last week and today—you've heard from a number of organizations and they have highlighted support for Bill 242, but also concerns around strengthening the legislation, in particular from our affiliated unions, the teachers' federations, as well as the Canadian Union of Public Employees and our community partner, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. We certainly support all of their recommendations.

I'm not going to read this. As a Newfoundlander, I can speak very quickly, but I chose not to do that today. What I want to do is focus on two particular aspects of concern that the federation has.

One is on the seamless day/seamless year, and the financial support and where we believe school boards should be directed; as well as the whole issue of fair wages and pay equity obligations for ECEs.

This is really an exciting time for Ontario, a very exciting time, as we move forward to begin to build the foundation of what we hope will become a very stable early learning and care system in this province. Frankly, we want it done right, because we all know that as we bring in new systems, if you go off track, it's really hard to get back on the track again.

When we talk about how we're going to bring about early learning and care within the school system, we have always believed in the vision that it would be a seamless day, that children would come to the school at 7 or 7:30 and leave the school at 6. There will be a core part of that day, and then the other part of the day will be addressed by ECEs in terms of learning through play.

One of the things that we have been hearing, and we are gravely concerned about, is a lobby that has been arguing that school boards should have the ability to opt out of delivery of extended day. This is so wrong, to do that. It is wrong for kids; it is really bad for parents; it's bad for the workers; and frankly, it is bad for the creation of the system that this province needs: a stable system.

If you contract out to a third party, what you would impinge on is that need for children to have a greater sense of security, belonging and a place. It is that sense that both children and parents need.

The other thing is: When children are within the school system, within that seamless day, the extended day, it would improve conditions for learning and in a comfortable, familiar, safe environment. I'm sure that some of you in this room have had the experience of having a four- or five-year-old, be it your own child, nephew, niece. When you keep moving them about, it is extremely upsetting for them, and it is just not conducive for the environment that we want for kids.

The other concern we have—a number of concerns, actually, in terms of contracting out to a third party—is that you undermine the coherence of early learning and care programs. You add a whole other layer of fragmentation, which is the very thing we're trying to move around. When you're talking about building a system, you can't add another layer of fragmentation to our already fragile network.

There would be no requirement—certainly, we haven't seen, in the context of what's being proposed by the parties lobbying for this—for the third party provider to adopt an early learning program, nor is there any structure for communication between staff in the early learning program and staff of the third party provider.

We would argue that if you do this, you actually create another class of precarious workers, where ECEs will be asked to work split shifts as well as part-time work.

The third, really key issue is—well, it's more than third; it's probably the fifth issue. One of the difficulties we've already identified is the retention issue within the child care system. If, by any stretch of the imagination,

you think that qualified, trained ECEs are going to stay in a precarious situation, you're wrong. What it's going to create is in fact a revolving door, as ECEs look for more stable employment.

We state in the strongest terms that such a provision of contracting out to a third party of the extended day is bad for kids, bad for parents and bad for workers. It would undermine the government's full-day learning program even before it gets off the ground.

On the issue of direction to school boards, this legislation should ensure that full-day learning is an all-day, year-round program delivered by the school boards. School boards should be obligated to provide hot lunches and snacks. Class sizes should be capped at 26 and not have that as an average class size. There should be confirmation that there will be two staff in extended day programs, as well as assurance that, whenever possible, early childhood educators receive full-time employment.

The other point I want to raise is the issue of pay equity and fair wages. One of the things that we would strongly argue is on the wage rate that had been identified in the operating funding of ECE wages starting in this sector at \$19.48. We believe that, in fact, it would not be pay-equity-compliant, which is a requirement under the act. If you look at school boards that have already done pay equity plans, where they already have classifications for ECEs, those wage rates are around \$25 an hour, so to establish a wage rate of \$19.48, I would argue, would not be pay-equity-compliant.

The other area I want to raise is the recent budget. Frankly, we're very pleased that within the budget, in the context of the wage freeze, the government identified that it cannot opt out of pay equity or human rights obligations. But at the same time, you are identifying that those obligations are there or set by law, and you cannot negate them through a wage freeze. At the same time, you are obligating school boards to live up to their pay equity obligations, but no funding is following that. What we have grave concern about is that school boards, in order to keep up not only with pay equity obligations but also implementing this program, will take from other budget lines and bring it into this program. It has never been the vision of this government, it hasn't been the vision of opposition parties, and it certainly hasn't been the vision of child care advocates that you take from one child and give to another.

As we build a system, it is critical that we provide the monies that are needed to build that system and build it right. We have never argued that this system has to be created overnight, because it can't be; there has to be a transitional period. That is why the government, when it brought in its early learning and care program, in fact, spread it out over a number of years.

As we move forward on this, there are a couple of things I want to say. First of all, I want to acknowledge the importance of the investment that the government gave in the last budget, of the \$63.5 million. It was absolutely critical for community- and municipal-based child care so that, quite frankly, the floor didn't fall out

from under the feet of those parents and those children. When we move forward, the Pascal report is a fantastic road map, but we have to follow that road map. We can't just choose one particular part of it. If we're going to build a system that is good for children, good for parents, good for the workers in that sector and, we would argue, good for the economy of this province, then we have to move forward in a holistic approach. We can't take from one section and put that other section, be it subsidies—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Madame Sceviour, for your deputation on behalf of the Ontario Federation of Labour. On behalf of the committee, we appreciate your presence.

Are there any other individuals who are scheduled to testify before our committee here present: Ms. Gilligan, Ms. Hermiston, Ms. Xuereb?

Committee is recessed for 10 minutes.

The committee recessed from 1559 to 1628.

MS. MICHELLE XUEREB

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Committee is back in session. We have our next presenter. I'd invite Ms. Michelle Xuereb to please come forward. You'll have 10 minutes in which to make your presentation, and perhaps some time for questions remaining afterward. We invite you to please begin now.

Ms. Michelle Xuereb: My name is Michelle Xuereb. I'm a mother and a working professional.

I have a three-year-old daughter who attends Junction Day Care, which is in Annette public school. This is a daycare that has been running successfully for 30 years now. Right now, it provides care to about 90 children, two and a half to 12 years of age.

The all-day learning program, as it's outlined presently in Bill 242, will have an enormous impact on our child care centre, possibly causing it to close at a time when we know there's already not enough affordable, accessible care within our community.

We'd like to start by thanking the provincial government for its foresight in engaging Dr. Charles Pascal to examine the existing system. We welcomed his report because it sought to replace a fragmented system with a continuum of care from zero to 12 years. His recommendations centred around four key items: full-day learning for fours and fives, before- and after-school programs, consolidation of programs for younger children, and expanded parental leave. Our concern is that the current legislation picks out only one part of Dr. Pascal's report, four- and five-year-old all-day learning. Ignoring the other recommendations makes the entire, already precarious system vulnerable to collapse.

Pascal's recommendations showed a depth of understanding of the intricate interconnections within the pre-existing system and the enormous impact that child care has on working families. As a working parent, I worry about rising fees, about losing my job if my child gets sick, about whether my child is getting the attention she needs, and about the amazing women who care for my

daughter and whether they'll be able to continue doing the important work that they do.

We recognize and support the provincial government's move to expand all-day learning. Bill 242 presently does not address children aged four and under, yet this is an age group which will be heavily impacted by the bill. Junction Day Care presently cares for 24 four- and five-year-olds. When these children move into all-day learning, we'll need to look at changing our mandate to provide services to children under four. Caring for younger children requires higher adult-to-child ratios. This makes providing the service more expensive. This will mean an increase in the already high fees that parents are paying. It is a known fact that when fees go up, there is a drop in the labour force participation.

We know that there is a high need in our area to provide quality care for children under four. Unless transition money is set aside to assist us in this change, our centre is in jeopardy of closing. We have 30 years of experience providing child care within our community. We need to be engaged in this process, not legislated out of existence. We're extremely concerned that if the government does not include children aged zero to four in its mandate, the present system will destabilize, offering the perfect opportunity for substandard, big-box daycare to move in and fill the gap. As a parent, I cringe at the thought.

Under Bill 242, the ratio for the classroom is 1:13, with no cap on classroom size. This is a higher ratio than my child currently has. The before- and after-school care ratio is not specified, but recent job postings seem to indicate that only one staff member will provide this care. I don't know if you've ever been into a daycare at the end of the day, but it's chaotic. How will staff safely supervise outdoor play, deal with emergency situations, take children to the bathroom or share information with parents? Have you ever been alone in a room with 13 four-year-olds? If you had, you would never allow these ratios to pass uncontested.

Running parallel to Bill 242 are the proposed changes to the Day Nurseries Act which look to decrease the adult-to-child ratios. This is no way to address the present funding crisis.

As part of the city of Toronto, our daycare has a policy to include children with special needs. This requires more staff to children, in addition to specialized training. How will the early learning program support this policy? How will individual needs of children who may need more individual attention be met?

Currently my child has supervised care not just during the school year between 9 and 3.30, but every day from 7:30 to 6. As a working parent, I don't see how I could deal with any less than that. The plans for after-school care are not clear under Bill 242.

Our daycare currently provides a nutritious hot lunch in a family setting, supervised by child care staff. Whether it's from a busy working parent or a low-income family, the nutritional value of lunches that come into the school is generally very low. In order for children to be

able to benefit from all-day learning, they need to be well fed. Bill 242 needs to recognize this and make provisions for a lunch program for these young children.

Judging from the results of the first round of hiring by the Toronto District School Board, most of the ECE jobs in the early learning program will go to those currently working for the boards. We foresee layoffs to ECE staff currently working in community-based municipal centres, and the future of newly graduating ECEs is in jeopardy as we see a change from full-time, decent-income work to part-time work. It would be sadly ironic to see ECEs finally recognized as playing a vital role in the education of our children, only to have many of them facing unemployment. We urge you to remove the provision for a letter of permission, as there are many qualified ECE people who are educated and ready to fill these positions.

In the past month or so, we've been on an emotional rollercoaster as we watched the threats to funding for subsidized daycare spots and rent subsidies. These issues have been staved off temporarily. It is worrisome to me that a service as essential as child care could be held together so tenuously with funding that gets threatened when deficits are encountered.

I'm a mother and a working professional. I'm here today because I worry about the livelihood of my family and my community, going forward. I have the ability to go to work every day and be a contributing member of society because I know that my daughter is safely cared for in a place that she loves. If Junction Day Care collapses, so will my ability to provide for my family.

I stand here today as a representative of my child, my daycare and our community.

In summary, we support all-day learning and we support the full implementation of the Pascal report. Transition funding is critical for ensuring high-quality care for the zero to four. Adult-to-child ratios must not be sacrificed. Increased ratios must be implemented for children with special needs. Provide a nutritious lunch program for four- and five-year-olds. Summer, March break and PA days must all be part of the legislation. If a child is in full-day kindergarten, enrolment in the extended day program should be automatic. Well-paid, trained ECEs should be hired to work as a team with the kindergarten teachers. Capitalize on the experience of the existing municipal programs and help these programs remain viable.

This will create communities that are sustainable. Sustainable means resilience; resilience means the system won't be so easily thrown off balance. It means an improved, affordable, accessible system for all.

Through this legislation, we have the potential to create a child care system which is as meaningful as our universal health care system. It can be something of which we are all proud, and which all Canadians will fight to protect.

Thank you for your time. We look forward to working with you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you. Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for your presentation too. I think some of the concerns you've outlined have been outlined by others and are being listened to by this government.

At full inception, the plan calls for the hiring and the existence of about 20,000 more ECEs than we have today, and close to 4,000 either JK or SK teachers. You were talking in terms of unemployment. It seems to me that we're thinking in terms of much greater employment. So we must be talking about the transition period, as we start to move into that.

Ms. Michelle Xuereb: Yes.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Okay, great.

The letters of permission have been raised by others, in that somehow the principal would choose to hire somebody who was less qualified or didn't have the qualifications at all that an ECE might possess. I think what may be being exaggerated in that is that this power resides with principals today in the teaching profession. When things get to a point where there simply is not somebody else to put in that room with those kids, the

principal has the authority to appoint somebody for a period of up to a year who is able to fill in a blank. I just don't see, in the city of Toronto, us having a shortage of ECEs, for example. If I think of the outlying areas and northern Ontario, perhaps you can envision that type of scenario. But it certainly is not the intent, by including that in the legislation, that that would become standard practice by any means.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I need to intervene there, Mr. Flynn. I'd like to thank you, Ms. Xuereb, for your deputation and coming forward today.

Before the committee adjourns, I need to call: Is Ms. Gilligan or Ms. Hermiston, who are scheduled presenters, present? If not, then the time is forfeited.

For the committee members, the deadline for filing amendments is Tuesday, April 6, at 12 noon.

Our committee is adjourned, if there is no further business, until April 12, 2010, for clause-by-clause consideration. Committee adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1639.

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