



ISSN 1710-9477

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 22 March 2010

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 22 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

Président : Shafiq Qadri
Greffier : Katch Koch

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE

Monday 22 March 2010

Lundi 22 mars 2010

The committee met at 1401 in committee room 1.

APPOINTMENT OF SUBCOMMITTEE

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. We're here this afternoon to hear deputations on 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.

The first thing we have to do is appoint the subcommittee on committee business. Mr. McMeekin?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I move that a subcommittee on committee business be appointed to meet from time to time at the call of the Chair or at the request of any member of this committee to consider and report to the committee on the business of the committee;

That the presence of all members of the subcommittee is necessary to constitute a meeting;

That the subcommittee be composed of the following members: the Chair as Chair, Ms. DiNovo, Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Witmer; and

That substitution be permitted on the subcommittee.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Any discussion? If none, all those in favour? Opposed? That's carried.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Next is the report of the subcommittee on committee business. Can somebody move the report? Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Your subcommittee on committee business met on Tuesday, March 9, 2010, to consider the method of proceeding on 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, and recommends the following:

(1) That the committee meet for the purpose of holding public hearings on Monday, March 22, Tuesday, March 23 and Monday, March 29, 2010, in Toronto.

(2) That the clerk of the committee, with the authority of the Chair, place an advertisement for one day about the public hearings in major daily newspapers in Ontario.

(3) That the clerk of the committee post information regarding the hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel and the Legislative Assembly website.

(4) That interested people who wish to be considered to make an oral presentation on Bill 242 should contact the clerk of the committee by Wednesday, March 17, 2010, at 5 p.m.

(5) That the clerk of the committee provide a list of all interested presenters to the subcommittee following the deadline for requests.

(6) That the length of presentations for witnesses be 10 minutes.

(7) That the deadline for written submissions be Monday, March 29, 2010, at 5 p.m.

(8) That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee be Tuesday, April 6, 2010, at noon.

(9) That clause-by-clause consideration of the bill be scheduled for Monday, April 12, 2010.

(10) That sign language interpretation service be provided for the public hearings if necessary.

(11) That the research officer provide the committee a summary of the deputations prior to clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

(12) That the clerk of the committee, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized prior to the adoption of the report of the subcommittee to commence making any preliminary arrangements to facilitate the committee's proceedings.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Any comments? All those in favour? Opposed? That's carried.

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.

MS. KATE TENNIER

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): The first presentation is from Ms. Kate Tennier. While you're getting settled, if you could identify yourself when you're seated. The procedure is that you have 10 minutes.

Interjection.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Okay. I'll try to speak louder.

If you could identify yourself for Hansard. You have 10 minutes. Any time that is left over will be divided amongst the three parties for any questions. You may begin.

Ms. Kate Tennier: Okay. Is this on?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Yes.

Ms. Kate Tennier: I'll be using my full 10 minutes.

Since all-day schooling for three- to five-year-olds was announced by Dalton McGuinty in 2007, it was obviously a done deal. Parents' voices were silenced early on. In a December 5, 2007, TVO interview, Charles Pascal, your go-to kindergarten man, pre-emptively bullied parents who didn't want more school for little kids, including but not limited to his infamous comments about these parents having issues. As it is still overwhelmingly mothers who do the care and education work, this is a sort of weird return to the 1950s, when mothers who wanted to work outside the home were told by men that they had issues.

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Don't for a second pretend that parents were brought to the table on this one.

Research shows that children this age spending more time in school is not beneficial. In several newspaper articles, I've written about why the outcomes for young children are worsened. If your concern is genuine, please read them.

Indeed, reports used to actually justify your program would not withstand a minute of international scrutiny. In his interview, Pascal gave as evidence the decades-old Ypsilanti Perry preschool study, a study so irrelevant to today's world that it's rendered impotent as justification for programs such as yours. In fact, in May 2006, the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre at the University of London emphatically warned policy-makers not to use this study. It states: "On the basis of this review, the widespread international use of the most favourable headline findings, and in particular of the Perry High/Scope study, is unjustified."

It goes on: "The Perry High/Scope study, started in the 1960s, was a small, single-site study, where children were given part-time nursery education and their parents were given support through home visits."

Part-time—let's emphasize that. You are using a study of part-time nursery education from the early 1960s to advocate the movement of hundreds of thousands of little kids from a part-time program to full-time schooling. This borders on, if not outright defines, negligence.

And it goes on. Helen Ward, the president of our country's non-profit Kids First Parents Association of

Canada, is submitting a statement to this committee. It is a must-read. Ward, whose work is cited internationally, goes over Pascal's repeated bending of others' work to justify your program, including the research of Nobel laureate James Heckman, to seemingly bolster his argument, without the absolutely necessary qualifier that Heckman is a known opponent of universal programs.

In yet another example, Pascal references, in his add-on report summarizing his evidence, the Baker, Gruber and Milligan study, again in a manner that seemingly supports his position, while failing to mention that anyone with even a grade 2 reading level would quickly determine that this award-winning study of the Quebec situation comes nothing close to endorsing that province's troubled universal daycare program. In fact, the evidence is so compellingly the opposite, that the well-regarded David Leonhardt of the New York Times used this Quebec report to explain why universal programs of this nature backfire for kids and families.

With tax savings from declining school enrolment, you could have reduced class sizes across the board. Science labs, cooking classes, woodworking shops, school gardens and music as a part of each child's everyday life were all things our collective pot of money could have been spent on.

Or you could have given kindergarten parents a voucher to put them at the heart of their child's education, through a kindergarten credit.

You could have used vouchers, a tool of the compassionate left, as a means of empowering citizens. The great left-liberal James Coleman, author of the iconic *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, and Ivan Illich, whom the über-left *Utne Reader* lauded as the greatest social critic of the 20th century, were both strong, strong supporters of vouchers. It is a complete myth that vouchers are a right-wing idea.

Conversely, de facto mandatory early schooling and daycare schemes such as yours are increasingly being seen for what they are. In the words of Berkeley's Bruce Fuller, the author of the pivotal book *Standardized Childhood*, your type of program is being seen by many as a conservative—as in right-wing economics—attempt to fit mothers and children into the corporate economy.

Serious educational reformers know that regardless of how much schooling children receive, the effects of the home will always, always be much stronger, and that's why they know that the only solution is to empower those very parents in that home.

This is where research actually backs up the claim. A special home-schooling double issue of the prestigious peer-reviewed *Peabody Journal of Education* had many findings, including those by Susan McDowell, the journal's editor, who wrote about the beneficial empowerment that home-schooling mothers feel.

Further peer-reviewed research has found that "students taught at home by mothers who never finished high school scored a full 55 percentage points higher than public school students from families with comparable education levels."

This is obviously about more than home-schooling. It is about the irrefutable fact that when given the lead role in their child's education, whether they provide it themselves or direct their voucher to care and education of their own choosing, the lives of children, mothers and families are enhanced, particularly those who were never served well by your system in the first place.

Money directed to families, of course, provides a much larger economic stimulus than having it sucked right back into state coffers because of the greater marginal propensity for spending by those in need—and the needs of parents are greater than any other group. This would provide an immediate reduction in child poverty rates, as estimates put this kindergarten voucher for even just a half-day at between \$4,500 and \$5,000 per year.

You say that this schooling scheme is linked to poverty reduction. Well, we don't see it, unless, of course, you mean the kind where mothers are now supposedly liberated from the home to go out and work at exciting minimum-wage service sector jobs.

Ironically, Ontario is coming to the early schooling/daycare frenzy so late that we're not so much getting on a boat that's already set sail but on one that has already sunk. The most famous early adopter, Sweden, is now addressing the destruction wrought by having parents shut out of their children's educational lives. Visionary politicians like Mats Gerdau, now a member of the Swedish national Parliament, set up mothers as their own enterprises so they could be paid for their previously unpaid work.

Then there are people like Bo Pettersson, webmaster of Children's Right to Their Parents, a growing parents' group which pushed for and achieved remarkable success when their government was forced in 2008 to start giving vouchers worth up to \$7,500 per year directly to parents.

I have no confidence you'll put a halt to a program that was clearly founded on faulty information. But I have much confidence in that great tool of our age, the Internet, to get Hansard transcripts out to the growing international community of mothers and fathers who are pushing back against these programs which, while masquerading as benevolent left-liberal offerings, are anything but.

People understand this. Check out any news outlet—even the Toronto Star, where columnist Rosie DiManno wrote a brilliantly scathing critique of all-day kindergarten—and you will find blog posters critical of your cynical attempt to appease the teachers' unions and augment your own power at the expense of the very people you purport to serve.

One mother I see at our local grocery store, always with her two young children in tow, opened her coat to show me the rips and tears in it, telling me that that's all she could afford. She doesn't want more daycare or schooling. What she wants and what she deserves is more financial help for the few years while her kids are young, so that she and her husband can provide the most crucial ingredient in the successful upbringing of her children:

time—time with her own kids. I'm not sure what part of that you refuse to understand.

My experience testifying in Parliament is that the questions are the “gotcha,” rhetorical, grandstanding kind, so if anybody has any useful questions, I'll answer them. Otherwise, I just came to get this on the official record.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Thank you very much. There are 30 seconds, approximately, for each side. Ms. Witmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I do appreciate very much your presentation. Unfortunately, we've heard from very few people who have contrary views, and even though we know—

Ms. Kate Tennier: I tried very hard. I've got emails from Tom Teahen, the chief of staff to Kathleen Wynne. They were not interested. We were shut out from the beginning. I was a grade 1 teacher, a primary specialist. I've also had a day nursery licence. I've spoken nationally about this issue, had op-eds in the Globe and Mail, but they didn't want to hear from us. I want that for the record.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I don't have any useful questions. Thank you, Kate.

Ms. Kate Tennier: You don't have any? No, I didn't think so.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I didn't think you would think that I did.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Mr. Zimmer—
Interjection.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Thank you very much.

YMCA ONTARIO

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): The next presenter is YMCA Ontario. Good afternoon. If you could please identify yourselves for Hansard, you may begin.

Mr. Shaun Elliott: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Shaun Elliott, and I'm the CEO of the YMCA of Western Ontario. I'm accompanied today by my colleague Linda Cottes, who's a senior vice-president of child, youth and family development at the YMCA of Greater Toronto.

On behalf of the 24 YMCAs in Ontario, we'd like to thank you for the opportunity to present. We find this a very important bill, the Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act.

We're an organization that families trust with children. We have a 40-year history in the delivery of child care. We understand the complexity and challenges faced by families, and we work hard to be responsive to the diversity of their needs and interests.

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We know that quality, choice, accessibility and affordability are important to families. Every year, 300,000 children aged zero to 12 participate in YMCA programs

throughout this province. We're the largest not-for-profit early learning and child care provider in Ontario, operating nearly 600 centres with more than 24,000 licensed spaces. Eighty-one percent of our centres are located in schools, and the YMCA is also the lead agency operating eight Ontario early years centres.

YMCAs are responsive to the communities we're part of, and we've always expanded and developed new programs and innovations in partnership with others: school boards, the provincial government, municipalities, researchers, academics and local community agencies, to name a few. These partnerships are a key strength, and allow us to provide the best support to families and improve outcomes for the children.

Appearing before the legislative committee is rare for the YMCA. It's because of the unique role we play in providing vital child care services in communities across Ontario and our serious concerns about the implementation of full-day learning that we are here today.

We want to be very clear from the outset: The YMCA supports full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. From both a developmental and an education perspective, it's sound public policy. It's also good for children. But Bill 242 goes far beyond the government's stated objectives, and will have the unintended effect of destabilizing Ontario's licensed child care system. Parents and children will pay the price.

Specifically, the YMCA is extremely disappointed that the vision for full-day learning excludes community partners and fails to recognize the valuable role we play in ensuring that young children get the supports, care and education they need.

We will highlight three key implementation challenges that, if not addressed, will have a direct impact on the children and families who rely on the YMCA and other community child care providers. Parents will be left with fewer options and higher costs if the bill remains unamended.

The first challenge is the implementation of extended day programs for four- and five-year-olds. Bill 242 states clearly that every school board shall operate extended day programs for four- and five-year-olds. This means that school boards will be prohibited from partnering with quality, experienced, community-based child care providers. In the YMCA's case, we are providing before- and after-school programs now at almost 500 schools in Ontario. We have a good model; it's working, and it's cost-effective. But under this act, school boards would have to establish and operate separate extended day programs for four- and five-year-olds even if there is already a program located in their school or close by. This would be duplication and, dare I say, confusion on a massive scale.

Bill 242 further provides the minister with the authority to issue guidelines or policies relating to all aspects of the operation of before- and after-school programs, including authorizing boards to provide summer programs.

So you see that the bill is quite detailed and broad in scope. It goes far beyond granting legislative authority

for full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. It represents a fundamental shift in the delivery of child care services and supports to children over the age of four. The value of the original idea—full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds—may well be lost, and that would be an opportunity lost.

The second challenge is ensuring a continued and meaningful role for community providers in operating extended day programs for six- to 12-year-olds. Given the breadth and scope of the bill, the YMCA is also very concerned about the long-term policy for programs for six- to 12-year-olds.

Bill 242 should plainly state that there's a clear role for not-for-profit community providers in delivering before- and after-school programs for six- to 12-year-olds and permit school boards to establish or continue those partnerships. Our partnerships are the best way to reap the benefits of full-day learning.

I am going to turn it over to Linda, and she's going to discuss the third implementation issue: risks to the sustainability of child care under the proposed system.

Ms. Linda Cottes: Transferring the care of four- and five-year-olds to the education sector will have a significant impact on the YMCA's ability to continue to provide child care to babies and preschool children.

One of the key factors is the current financial model of not-for-profit child care. It relies on complex funding and wage subsidy programs as well as a mix of age cohorts to achieve cost efficiencies. This model has evolved over time to compensate for the underfunding of the sector, a situation that won't be helped by the end of federal child care funding.

Infants, toddlers and preschool children require the most amount of care, and therefore are the most expensive cohort. So having a mix of older children helps us achieve efficiencies. In effect, the older children subsidize the younger ones. With no four- or five-year-olds in our care, we face increased operating costs that will result in higher fees to the parents. Where will those parents go to find care for their children? Unlicensed, unregulated care or informal arrangements.

At the time of the announcement, the government acknowledged the challenges and committed to provide funding to stabilize the child care sector. We've heard no details since.

Our message here is: Let's not implement a great program for four- and five-year-olds on the backs of the younger children. Children need quality care at the younger age if they're going to be ready for full-day learning.

Consider that school boards will be offering substantially higher wages for early childhood educators. Let me say that we applaud the recognition given to registered early childhood educators and believe strongly that their wages should reflect their education, hard work and value. But you can see that a staffing crisis will result for community providers as our ECEs leave for higher wages and benefits. This will directly impact the children and their families who are in child care: sadly, the youngest and most vulnerable.

Mr. Shaun Elliott: We stand ready to help make full-day learning a success. Let us use our 40 years of experience, the reputation and trust we have built up, and our philosophy of collaboration to make full-day learning a success. Don't shut us out; let us work together for the sake of Ontario's families.

The YMCAs of Ontario, together with the Quality Early Learning Network and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada in Ontario, have drafted specific amendments, including:

- adding not-for-profit community providers as partners in the Education Act;

- changing the definition of “extended day programs”;

- permitting school boards to partner with community providers for before- and after-school programs for four- and five-year-olds;

- permitting school boards to partner with community providers for the delivery of extended day programs before and after school for children ages six to 12; and

- requiring regulations for all matters dealing with before- and after-school programs, as opposed to minister's guidelines and policies.

Thank you for the opportunity to present to you. We are providing the committee with a set of draft amendments for your consideration. I have a copy of them here, and we'll distribute them after. We'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Thank you very much. Thirty seconds for each side. Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you both for the presentation. We've been hearing from a lot of folks who provide child care that when you take the four-year-olds and the five-year-olds without providing support to those child care centres, they're going to be threatened. Many of them are saying it; I suspect that's why many of them are coming today. Did you have any discussions before and/or during the last little while indicating, from the government, that somehow these concerns will be addressed? Because if they're not going to be addressed, I am as worried as you are.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Thank you, Mr. Marchese. The government side: Mr. Ramal.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you very much for your presentation. I guess we've been in discussion with Mr. Elliott for quite some time. Hopefully your issue will be addressed. I know that we took your concern with respect, and hopefully it will be addressed through the ministry. As I said to you earlier, when we met with you in your office, our government studied all the elements, and that's why we had those sessions—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Thank you very much. Ms. Witmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I very much appreciate your presentation. I've had my own Y come to see me, and I was actually quite shocked that the government hadn't taken this into consideration prior to the introduction of the bill.

I can tell you that I support these recommendations. I'm really concerned about the future of daycare and the impact it can have on families that are not going to be involved in the full-day—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Thank you very much. Thank you for your presentation.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Next, we have the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. Good afternoon. Could you identify yourselves for Hansard, please? You may begin.

Ms. Colleen Schenk: Good afternoon. I'm Colleen Schenk, president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, and I am joined today by my vice-presidents, Catherine Fife and Riley Brockington. I'd like to thank you as well for the opportunity to comment on Bill 242.

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OPSBA wholeheartedly embraces the fundamental importance of full-day early learning and recognizes that investing in the early years of our children represents one of the most far-reaching and responsible investments we can make in Ontario's future. With this in mind, we have provided the committee with a detailed written submission on the bill, the early learning program and our recommendations. Our remarks will focus on specific provisions of Bill 242 and address some of the implementation issues and future plans that are of interest to our members.

OPSBA strongly recommends that the ministry allow for local flexibility and permit boards to use alternatives for the delivery of the extended day program.

Many boards currently use third party, community-based organizations, such as local daycare providers, YMCAs, and the Boys and Girls Clubs that operate extended day programs in our schools, including Best Start. This is an arrangement that is working very well. Schools have built long-standing relationships that are extremely successful and are very much in keeping both with the values of the seamless day envisioned in Dr. Pascal's report and with the collaboration with other organizations, that provides for stronger communities. Under this legislation these arrangements would not be permitted to continue, except on a limited basis during the first year of implementation.

A good example of this can be seen with Peel District School Board and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. Both have a working relationship with several organizations including PLASP—formerly known as the Peel lunch and after-school program—Family Day and the YMCA. PLASP Child Care Services is a not-for-profit organization with fairly sophisticated financial and fee collection systems. It has been involved with both Peel school boards for over 20 years and provides programs for children up to 12 years of age that include before-school, lunch-hour and after-school care as well

as PA/PD days, Christmas and March break holidays. These relationships have developed into school-based partnerships that provide seamless transitions and services for children and their families.

Moreover, the elimination of these groups and individuals from the provision of services will weaken community ties.

Due to the complexity of the implementation of the extended day program, there are many boards that are primarily focused on the requirement of offering full-day kindergarten, and as such need to concentrate their efforts and available resources initially to ensure the day portion of the early learning program is successful.

The bill also allows for boards to enter into agreements with other boards to provide extended day programs. We see this as an opportunity for partnerships and the sharing of successful practices and resources. This flexibility is appreciated but, as stated previously, we recommend that boards also be allowed to partner with other organizations to deliver the extended day component.

OPSBA supports the ministry's intention of allowing municipalities and other parties to continue the management of the subsidy process. This is an area that has been managed extremely well and is not something that is a core business to school boards. Our member school boards have indicated that the provision of financial assistance or subsidies is not a function in which school boards wish to be involved. Further, leaving the subsidy process in the hands of the municipalities enables families to have one point of application when requesting subsidies for both preschool and school-aged children.

Mr. Riley Brockington: With regard to the fees that are to be charged for the extended day program, OPSBA members have noted the unintended consequence of fees being used as a means to compete for students between boards and existing third party organizations. We know that there are differences among school boards in how they have structured their operations, and this will affect their cost-recovery ability, that may result in either higher or lower fees for the extended day component.

In addition, our members foresee an increased administration workload around the collection of fees. These additional duties will require increased administrative staffing levels and revised organizational structures and processes. OPSBA has consulted with third party providers and been advised that fee collection will be a major undertaking, which will be a new and additional task for school boards. Boards face a significant challenge to set up a fee collection process and to implement a centralized system for fee collection by September.

We also want to note, through the 2009-10 GSN announcement, the ministry has indicated a reduction in funding for administration and governance. We recommend that the ministry not implement this funding reduction, especially when school boards are dealing with a significant increase in admin workload in connection with the implementation of the ELP and the extended day program.

School boards are anxious to learn the details regarding the calculation of extended day program fees. OPSBA requests that we be consulted regarding the fee regulation. While we recognize that boards will have different operating costs, we want fees to be affordable for parents and similar to the fee at local coterminus school boards.

In addition to the issue of fees, our members are also anxious about the potential for overall underfunding of the program and ultimately the real costs associated with the delivery of the ELP. While we recognize that funding has been allocated for years one and two, boards are apprehensive about potential gaps in funding and are tracking their actual costs. We believe that this program needs to be fully funded in order to enable boards to offer it without reducing funding to other critical programs unrelated to the ELP.

We note that the legislation clearly outlines the duties of ECEs and aligns them more closely with teachers. The listed duties clearly recognize ECEs as professionals who co-deliver their program with teachers. OPSBA believes that this recognition will lead to stronger programs and better outcomes for children. Early, consistent and on-going training will need to be a major focus for the successful implementation of the program, and it should include all partners.

School boards look forward to assisting with the development of a positive, co-operative and professional working relationship between teachers and ECEs. We note that clause 5 of this section states that ECEs will receive their duties from the principal and not the teacher. OPSBA appreciates this clarification, as it supports the team approach and co-delivery of the program. We look forward to the release of the ministry's program document to see how this will look in practice in the classroom.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We know that there are many parts of the early learning program that are not contained within Bill 242, and these focus more on implementation issues and future plans. Although OPSBA represents school boards, we are partners in education of the whole child, and we are concerned about the future of not only those child care providers currently located in our schools, but also of the child care community in general. We know that the federal funding for child care is about to expire at the end of March 2010, and we would urge the Ontario government to continue to vigorously pursue funding solutions that will maintain stability for the child care community.

The ELP will have an unintended impact on the provision of child care programs for the zero-to-three age range. The financial viability and sustainability of many existing programs is linked to the balance with programs for four- and five-year-olds in the child care setting. This needs to be carefully considered to ensure that no family or child is left without the care they require. Our association believes that the early learning program must be accessible for all students, including those children with special needs and our First Nations, Métis and Inuit

students, and that many cultural backgrounds and languages that our students bring with them need to be reflected.

OSPBA requests that the ministry give full consideration to the needs and requirements of our vulnerable kindergarten students with special education and/or medical needs. The change to full-day programming for these students is significant and requires appropriate supports and resources being made available in a timely and planned manner. This necessitates seamless coordination between the various ministries providing medical and ongoing therapies and supports for these children. It is critical that, at minimum, these children do not receive a lower level of service compared to the service they have been receiving through community care access centres and other community-based service providers. We will continue to provide our advice as members of a working group dedicated to special education students.

We recommend that as the curriculum and program documents are developed and fine-tuned for full-day early learning, they include First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives that support identity development, particularly through language and culturally relevant materials. Urban aboriginal children in particular can have significant challenges in terms of their identity.

OSPBA feels strongly that children need a sense of history and belonging. The more children know about their first language and history, the more they have the confidence and foundation to be successful learners.

In conclusion, OPSBA members have been supportive of the ELP, and we look forward to a continued collaborative working relationship with the Ministry of Education as the program rolls out.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Thank you for appearing before us today.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No time for questions?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): You used up all your time.

1440

BEATTY BUDDIES DAYCARE

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Next is Beatty Buddies Daycare.

Good afternoon. If you could please identify yourselves for Hansard, you may begin.

Ms. Lisa Winters-Murphy: My name is Lisa Winters-Murphy, and this is Jeanne McKane. I'd like to thank you, on behalf of the staff I work with and the parents in our centre, for this opportunity. I'm the managing director of Beatty Buddies Daycare, a not-for-profit child care centre operating in Earl Beatty Public School in the east end of Toronto since 1987.

For over 20 years, Beatty Buddies Daycare and many other centres like ours in Ontario have been living out the model of full-day kindergarten with its community focus and collaboration with the school it is located in or near. We have been running programs supporting the early

learning vision of Dr. Charles Pascal, special adviser to the Premier.

We fully support the vision of full-day learning for all four- and five-year-olds in Ontario, but we are concerned that the proposed implementation of this plan outlined in Bill 242 puts other aspects of the child care continuum at risk. The existence of Beatty Buddies Daycare and centres like ours across the province is now under threat as a result of some of the terms proposed in this bill.

In his report, Dr. Pascal recommended the creation of a network of child care organizations to ensure the provision of care across locations and age groups. He recommended an integrated program with improvements for all children from infants to 12 years old.

Bill 242, however, states that school boards, and school boards alone, will deliver programming for four- and five-year-olds, as well as extended day programs for all school-age children. In other words, schools will not be permitted to collaborate with existing community agencies and programs.

The removal of children four and older from child care centres has significant implications for the economic viability of many licensed child care centres, including Beatty Buddies Daycare. We are asking that you revisit the implementation plans contained in Bill 242 and consider their effect on the child care sector, on families and on Ontario's children.

In order to realize the worthy vision contained in Dr. Pascal's report, the government needs to implement all the recommendations of the report and establish programs that benefit children of all ages, not just four- and five-year-olds. There should be capital and transition funding for the early learning and child care sector, and existing levels of funding need to be maintained in the 2010 budget.

As mentioned, Beatty Buddies and centres like ours across the province have been delivering early learning for more than two decades. Our outstanding staff of certified early childhood specialists work hard to design programming that complements the Ontario curriculum, recognizes the needs of the individual child and provides family and community supports.

The original vision in Dr. Pascal's report saw schools becoming community hubs, open to their neighbourhoods and capable of providing opportunities for children's learning, care, health, culture, arts and recreation across the age spectrum. The vision of school as community hub has always been central to how Beatty Buddies and similar centres operate. In addition to providing full-day learning for kindergarten-age children and extended day programming for children ages 18 months to 10 years, we collaborate with school and community groups to support and enrich the lives of families.

For example, while kindergarten-age children are at school, we offer a nursery-school program for families with young children who choose to keep their children at home but want them to develop pre-kindergarten skills to get to know other children in their community.

We fill gaps in board programming and help families access extra supports for children with special needs, including access to Toronto city resource educators.

We hold first aid, CPR and other certifications and act as early learning resources for school staff and teachers.

We have coordinated programs with the family studies program at the local high school.

We offer students who have graduated from the Beatty Buddies program or have attended the family studies program volunteer opportunities to complete high school community service hours or gain experience for future endeavours. This, oftentimes, has led to part-time jobs before and after school with our centre or others like it over the summer break.

We also offer part-time care in the summer and winter breaks for children in the community.

We promote our unique program of male and female staff working together, for which we were recently profiled in the Toronto Star.

Most importantly, we support families with children of different ages that are able to bring their children to one place and watch them learn and grow in the same environment: a place where staff members are able to interact with families as a whole and see how each child fits into his or her family's structure.

There's no doubt that centres such as ours have the knowledge, the skills and the expertise to implement much of Dr. Pascal's vision. But in this era of fiscal challenges, we urge you to also consider the potential advantages of allowing school boards to collaborate with existing programs to deliver all components of early learning. Giving boards the opportunity to partner with existing programs and using existing resources can streamline planning and reduce costs.

We want to be part of the solution, but we need to be brought to the table. If current plans as outlined in Bill 242 are implemented, leaving licensed child care centres out of the planning and implementation, we will see a collapse of licensed child care centres, certified early childhood educators become underutilized and the vision of education in Ontario raising the bar go terribly wrong. This will hurt families, not help them.

Given that Ontario has been facing a severe child care shortage for many years, the potential closure of licensed child care centres and the loss of child care program spaces is certain to create a crisis in this province, worsening the very problem these proposed changes were intended to fix. Full-day learning was never intended to take from one child to give to another.

We look forward to seeing your recommendations for amendments to Bill 242 to ensure that it more completely realizes the vision outlined in Dr. Pascal's report, providing an integrated continuum of early learning for Ontario's children by allowing school boards to collaborate with licensed centres in the planning and implementation of full-day kindergarten.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Thank you very much. About a minute and a bit for each side. Mr. Flynn?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for your presentation. If I were to summarize what I just thought I heard you say, you say that you agree with the concept of full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds because it's a good thing for kids.

Ms. Lisa Winters-Murphy: Yes.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: But the implementation, though, in your opinion, needs some flexibility.

Ms. Lisa Winters-Murphy: Yes, which is what we are able to provide.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Wonderful. I just wanted to thank you for what you did for gender equality in the child care sector. I chaired a child care committee about 20 years ago in the region of Halton and authored a child care study, and I remember feeling a little bit like a round peg in a square hole, so it's nice to know that other guys are getting into the business or are expressing some interest in that. Thank you for your presentation.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Any further questions? Ms. Witmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much for your presentation. I think we're going to see that theme throughout the course of the three days, and that is the concern about leaving the licensed child care centres out of the planning and the implementation. Obviously, if we're going to meet the needs of all of the children under the age of five, we're going to have to make sure that you're involved in the dialogue and there continues to be a critical role. Otherwise, children three or under are going to be penalized and without an opportunity for care. I thank you for bringing this forward. It looks like, as Mr. Flynn said, you've done a great job.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Can I ask you—

Ms. Lisa Winters-Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm assuming that if the government had implemented all of Charles Pascal's recommendations, you might not have been so unhappy about the potential effects it would have on you.

Ms. Lisa Winters-Murphy: When we were asked to meet at the Ryerson Theatre two years ago, there was a vision of this collaboration.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right, and continuum.

Ms. Lisa Winters-Murphy: But since it has actually been—the process seems to be going along. It seems like we've been shut out—completely, actually—out of the process, and that's not the message that we were given two years ago, which I think is why so many of us are so unprepared. Considering we're a not-for-profit, how do you prepare for this uncertain future?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And that's why you're worried that as they draw the four- and five-year-olds into the school system—

Ms. Lisa Winters-Murphy: That's right.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —without any supports to the child care providers, you're going to be in trouble. That is the point, right?

Ms. Lisa Winters-Murphy: I'm also concerned about what exactly is going to happen to ECEs. Yes, there's a

message that there will be a partnership within the school boards, but the school boards are cash-strapped. They also have obligations to their own members. To hire ECEs—right now they're being hired hourly, and they're being put under a different union as support staff. So how do you explain that there's a true partnership to ECEs? That's just only going to lower the level of standards of what we offer.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Thank you very much for your presentation.

1450

FAMILY DAY CARE SERVICES

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): The next presenter is Family Day Care Services. If you could please identify yourself for Hansard. You have 10 minutes.

Mr. Doug Brown: Good afternoon. My name is Doug Brown, and I'm a board member of Family Day Care Services. I am accompanied today by our CEO, Joan Arruda. On behalf of Family Day, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to present on this very important bill, the Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010.

Family Day is a non-profit charitable organization with a distinguished history of providing services to children and families for over 155 years. Among the first organizations in Toronto to provide orphanages in the 1850s, we were leaders in the development of supervised foster care in the 1920s, were among the first in Ontario to develop day nurseries in the 1940s, and our pilot project in home-based child care in the 1960s became the legislated model for home child care in Ontario.

Today, we continue to deliver high-quality early learning and care. Employing more than 450 staff in Toronto, York and Peel, we offer centre-based child care and school-age programming from 37 locations, operate five Ontario early years centres and provide licensed home child care in partnership with 265 child care providers. In the city of Toronto, we partner to provide special needs resourcing. We provide early learning and care for over 3,200 children and over 10,000 children and their families who access our Ontario early years programs each year.

Family Day supports the government's move to full-day learning and extended day programs for four- and five-year-olds. For many years now, we have been working with our partners in education to develop a joint vision.

Our concerns are about the implementation of this policy—about the unintended consequences that will seriously impact children and families if Bill 242 is passed without amendments.

Ms. Joan Arruda: In our presentation today, we will focus on three key issues and provide potential solutions:

(1) The requirement in Bill 242 that school boards directly operate before- and after-school programs or extended day for four- and five-year-olds, thereby

prohibiting partnerships with local not-for-profit community providers;

(2) The financial impact resulting from the transfer of four- and five-year-olds to education;

(3) The unintended consequences that will occur if Bill 242 is passed without amendment.

We are concerned with the way full-day learning is being implemented and with key provisions of Bill 242. The combination poses a significant threat to the viability of child care in Ontario and will impact the children and families that we support.

Since the announcement of the Best Start program by this government in 2003, Family Day has been actively partnering with other community organizations and boards of education to develop an integrated vision of full-day early learning. We have invested time, energy and scarce resources into moving forward in good faith with this vision.

Therefore, Family Day was surprised that the model of partnership and collaboration was being abandoned for a model of direct delivery of the extended day by the school boards. That is, partnerships with community providers are no longer permitted; they are no longer an option. This will be codified in Bill 242.

A system of child care for before and after school already exists that is ready, willing, and has the expertise to continue to work in partnership with schools throughout the province.

The funding impact for us: There is no doubt that the funding model for child care has its challenges. However, we believe that the impact of Bill 242 will threaten the viability of the sector and its ability to continue to provide quality child care.

The child care system manages on a mixed system of parent fees, government subsidies and a combination of age groupings. The removal of children from the before-and-after or extended day component from our sector will only serve to increase parent fees for the younger age groups. Child care will become unaffordable for families and certainly not viable for not-for-profit child care organizations that will be forced to close programs.

There are other factors that will impact the non-profit community's ability to provide sustainable child care for children between the ages of zero to 3.8. These include:

—the termination of the federal dollars used to fund the Best Start initiative in Ontario; and

—in some areas, the school boards are going to be offering substantially higher salaries to early childhood educators. The issue of recruitment and retention for child care for our younger children will be made even worse for the community providers as many ECEs will be attracted to the higher wages and benefits. Family Day is a unionized work environment that strongly believes we should not be creating a two-tier system of salaries and benefits.

From a child development perspective, zero to three years are the most critical, and children require excellent child care in order to begin school well prepared for their full day of learning. The provision of child care for this

youngest age group is naturally the most labour-intensive and expensive component of the early learning system. Our complex funding system is a balancing act that relies on a mixed system of parent fees, government subsidies and the combination of age groupings in order to remain sustainable. The loss of the four- and five-year-olds in the child care system will dramatically affect our ability to remain viable. Sufficient stabilization funding will be critical to the survival of quality child care for children zero to 3.8.

At the moment, 89% of the programs that Family Day currently operates in Toronto, York and Peel are located in schools; 82% of these programs offer early learning and care for four- and five-year-olds. If the school boards are required to directly operate the before- and after-school programs for children aged four and five, as currently mandated in Bill 242, the financial impact will be devastating to our organization and to many other non-profits. These impacts will result in a significant increase in parent fees for the younger age group, estimated to be at least 25%. The magnitude of such an increase cannot be absorbed and is simply not sustainable for parents or for non-profit organizations. As a result, Family Day will be closing child care centres, parent fees will significantly increase, and there will be a net loss of child care in the GTA.

We really do not believe that this needs to be a consequence of implementing full-day early learning and Bill 242. A comprehensive transition plan with input from the community could address many of the concerns that we've expressed. However, without amendments to Bill 242, these impacts will not be reversible and the price tag for full-day early learning will rise dramatically.

The government needs to immediately announce sufficient and appropriate multi-year funding to stabilize the sector and ensure the provision of quality child care to children aged zero to 3.8. Full-day learning should not be achieved at the expense of the children and families who rely on quality child care for preschool-age children.

Family Day is a member of the Quality Early Learning Network. We support the draft amendments that were prepared jointly by the YMCAs of Ontario, the Quality Early Learning Network and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario.

We therefore recommend that Bill 242 be amended to specifically include not-for-profit community providers as partners in the Education Act, change the definition of the extended day programs, and permit school boards to partner with community providers for before- and after-school programs from four through 12. We also would like to see the requirement for regulations for all matters dealing with the extended day programs as opposed to minister guidelines and policies.

Our agency has a proven track record of providing high-quality, cost-effective services for children and their families. We bring with us a strong legacy of innovation and collaboration and a long history of providing quality early learning and care, and we want to use our resources to work with the government to ensure the best care and

education is available to children aged zero to 12. We all have a shared responsibility to collaborate as equals to provide the best environments for children and their families. Quite frankly, we owe it to them.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present today, and we are happy to respond to any questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Mrs. Witmer; 30 seconds each side.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much for an excellent presentation. Again, you've really focused on the same concern that we're hearing, and that is the challenge of not involving the not-for-profit sector in the provision of the before- and after-school and also the impact it's going to have on the younger children. So thank you so much. Very good.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Again, you're not the first to use the words "unintended consequences," not the first to talk about the fact that this good program should not be at the expense of other good programs. You're saying, "If you can do nothing else, make sure that you provide transitional funding and partnerships," to allow you to do the good work you're doing.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: My thanks, as well as everybody else's thanks, I'm sure, everybody else around the table. You've outlined some of the solutions you see should be coming from government: transition funding, that type of thing. What sorts of solutions should we expect to see from the sector? Do you have any ideas of things that the sector itself could do? I know it's going to be hard to answer that in 10 seconds. Are you considering solutions internally as well?

Ms. Joan Arruda: Yes, and I think we've outlined them well in our report.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Thank you very much.

1500

ONTARIO PRINCIPALS' COUNCIL

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Next we have the Ontario Principals' Council. Good afternoon. Could you identify yourselves for Hansard before you begin?

Mr. Doug Morrell: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Doug Morrell. I'm the president of the Ontario Principals' Council, representing more than 5,000 principals and vice-principals in Ontario's public elementary and secondary schools. Joining me today is Ken Arnott, an elementary principal with the York Region District School Board.

Due to our limited time here today, we have prepared a more fulsome submission for committee members. I encourage you to review that document as you continue to study this bill.

As educators, we agree with the concept of an early learning initiative that will help more of our young students be academically ready for grade 1. While we support the intent of this legislation, there are numerous

implementation issues that concern us, as it will be the principal, by and large, who will be responsible for making this work in schools. We encourage the minister to include us in her consultations before the important implementation details come into effect through regulation and/or policy.

The government has indicated that teachers and designated early childhood educators, or DECEs, will be responsible for team-teaching. However, there are few details as to how this will work in terms of planning, providing instruction, preparing report cards, disciplining students, participating in parent-teacher interviews and communicating with parents.

Recommendation 1: Clearly defined roles must be developed for the DECEs and kindergarten teachers. These job descriptions should be provided to principals and boards as soon as possible, so that we can assist our staff with the successful implementation of this program.

There will be a need for teachers and DECEs to meet on a regular basis in order to plan the program. The principal will also need to meet with team members to ensure that curriculum expectations are being met and teaching appraisals are being conducted. This may have to occur during teacher preparation time.

Recommendation 2: In negotiating collective agreements, the government and school boards must ensure that principals have the ability to align kindergarten teacher preparation time in order to ensure that kindergarten teachers and DECEs can meet to plan and prepare for instruction, reporting and communications. This time may also be used for meetings between the principal, the teacher and the DECE.

The legislation proposes that a principal be able to delegate to a vice-principal or another person approved by the board.

Recommendation 3: Since the extended day program must be staffed by at least one DECE, it is both reasonable and practical that a principal also be able to delegate to a designated or lead ECE. The government and school boards must negotiate provisions in the collective agreement that will allow delegation by principals.

Over the past few years, the OPC has raised the issue of appropriate supervision in schools and its impact on student safety. Adding full-day kindergarten as well as a before- and after-school program will increase the need for supervision for children who, by virtue of their age and maturity, are vulnerable and particularly in need of close, constant supervision. We do not have the resources or the ability, due to contract language, to increase this duty.

Recommendation 4: Principals must be given the authority to develop and assign the necessary supervision schedules to teachers, DECEs and other staff working with the early learning plan during both the instructional and extended day programs. The government and school boards must negotiate supervision duties in the interests of the safety of young children. If necessary, the principal must have the ability to require appropriate supervision to ensure safety for all students.

Given the very young age of the children involved—three-, four- and five-year olds—safety must be a priority. While there can be as many as 26 children in a JK/K classroom with the teacher and the DECE, there will be occasions when one of the adults has to leave the classroom for various reasons. That would leave one adult with 26 children, creating a safety issue that we know will be of concern to parents. No one adult can be expected to adequately supervise 26 young children alone.

Recommendation 5: Given the age of the children involved, there must always be at least two adults in a JK/K classroom during instructional time and the extended day program. In some cases, resources will be needed by schools to hire additional trained adults to provide this safety measure.

The DECE staff in schools will add another group of employees requiring orientation, induction, mentoring, assessment, performance appraisal, discipline, oversight and support.

Recommendation 6: We recommend that additional resources are required for the principal to deal with increased workload issues for providing ongoing professional development support to DECEs; a moratorium on DECE appraisals for the first year in order to allow everyone to focus on successfully getting the program off the ground, unless of course there's evidence of gross underperformance; and finally, DECE appraisals that are similar to the current teacher appraisal process, so that they are staggered and, following a satisfactory rating, not required for another five years.

Should DECEs decide to join a union other than ETFO in the public schools and negotiate essentially the same contract as teachers currently have, their planning time may be protected and/or limited in a collective agreement and may not coincide with the teachers'. This will no doubt create various issues around which collective agreement is to be considered paramount, what the responsibilities/duties of the teacher will be if the DECEs strike and vice versa, and how the classroom will be managed and instructed when both the teacher and the DECE are entitled to separate planning time.

Recommendation 7: The government must ensure provincial consistency, so that the collective agreements between teachers and DECEs do not create a situation in which one educator's job description or entitlements are in conflict with the other's. Maximum flexibility will be needed to ensure that students are not caught in the middle of a conflict between unions.

This initiative will require additional professional development for school leaders, so that they understand the concept of play-based learning and become knowledgeable about how and what to look for in terms of reading and writing experiences for younger children.

Recommendation 8: Additional resources are required for school leaders to obtain professional development in this new area.

While we support the concept of an early learning program, there are numerous issues that must be resolved

in order for this to be successful in schools. It is imperative that the government work quickly, and with the assistance of principal associations, to address these concerns, so that we can make this a workable and rewarding experience for our students.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Thank you very much. A little less than a minute each. Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Doug. You have raised a lot of good questions, and I've been worried since the introduction of this bill that a good idea can be jeopardized by not doing it right. I've been very worried about the tremendous obligations boards are going to be absorbing without the necessary supports, and I don't see them in the bill. Maybe they're thinking about it; I don't know.

You have raised many questions, including the issue of 26 children. But I remind you that that is an average, which means the numbers are likely to be higher. We're looking at potentially 30 or 32 students; so, supervision and other related problems in the classroom.

You've raised a lot of concerns, and I just hope we're going to get some answers from the government.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for your presentation. I really appreciated the statements you made about child safety. I remember my own child being in school and then travelling to, I think, what was called a first base program that was run by the YMCA. It was a before-and-after-school program. As a parent, you always hoped he got on the bus. You assumed he did, but you always hoped he did. These children, for the most part, I think, will be on-site all day long on all occasions. That's an important consideration.

Out of all the great recommendations you've made, is there any one that stands out as one that's going to be really difficult to address, or are these just challenges that have to be overcome?

Mr. Doug Morrell: I think these are all challenges that are important for the principal to have an understanding of, so that we can address the needs of the kids. And we always hope they get home.

1510

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: But it's achievable. These would be questions that could be answered.

Mr. Doug Morrell: They are questions that we need answers to, to make the program successful.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Ms. Jones.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Doug, I know that you didn't touch on this in your presentation but because so many of the previous presenters have, I wanted to ask whether the OPC has any thoughts on how they would feel if there was the incorporation of current not-for-profit providers in the school.

Mr. Ken Arnott: Sorry, can you repeat that?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Sure. Many of the presenters previously have raised concerns that the YMCA and current providers are not going to be part of the model if there are no amendments to this bill. Has the OPC had

any thoughts about how they would feel if the bill was amended with that change?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Very quickly.

Mr. Ken Arnott: At this point no, because we're still reviewing some of the practices that are going on throughout the province and it's not consistent at this point, so we'd like to explore that a little bit further.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Thank you very much.

QUALITY EARLY LEARNING NETWORK

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Vic Dhillon): Next we have the Quality Early Learning Network; Sharon Filger. Please identify yourself, and you may begin.

Ms. Sharon Filger: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Sharon Filger and I'm the executive director of the Macaulay Child Development Centre here in Toronto, and here is my colleague Elaine Levy, who is the director of child care services for WoodGreen Community Services in Toronto. Together, we're here to speak on behalf of the Quality Early Learning Network, and we thank you for this opportunity to present on this very important bill.

The Quality Early Learning Network represents 16 multi-site agencies across the GTA and Hamilton. Our members provide not-for-profit early learning and care for more than 35,000 children and employ more than 3,000 early childhood educators. Our community agencies are governed by strong boards of directors with close ties to our communities and who ensure the highest standard of accountability and effectiveness. We are a tremendous resource and we want to work with this government to ensure that the best care and education is available to children aged zero to 12.

So why are we here? We want to be very clear from the outset: Our network supports the government's goal of providing full-day learning and extended day programs for four- and five-year-olds. From both an education and developmental perspective, this is good for children and good for Ontario. Our concerns are about how this policy is being implemented. Specifically, we want to raise three issues with you today:

(1) Bill 242 prohibits school boards from partnering with not-for-profit community agencies for the delivery of before- and after-school programs. This simply does not make sense.

(2) There are serious financial impacts on the child care sector that must be addressed by government. Key provisions of Bill 242 threaten the fundamental viability of quality child care in Ontario.

(3) Bill 242 is broad in scope. The legislative framework goes well beyond the government's policy of implementing full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. As a result, there will be many unintended consequences if Bill 242 is not amended.

The issue of partnerships—and you've heard some of that already this afternoon: To the disappointment of the not-for-profit community, Bill 242 states that school

boards must directly operate the before- and after-school programs for four- and five-year-old children. That is, partnerships with community providers are no longer an option. With this approach, the Ministry of Education is essentially creating a parallel child care system.

We absolutely support the ministry's goal of reducing transitions for children from school and child care, and their desire to ensure consistency of programming and curriculum. But this can be accomplished without creating a parallel child care system and by continuing to build on the already strong partnerships that exist between schools and community providers, many of whose programs are already located in schools. These partnerships are effective and utilize the best that both sectors have to offer.

But Bill 242 goes even further. It permits school boards to offer before- and after-school programs for any school-aged children, including six to 12. This goes well beyond the government's stated objective of full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds.

It is the cumulative impact of all of these changes that is leading to the potential devastation of the child care sector in Ontario.

We ask this committee to consider these important questions: Why is the government turning away from its own Best Start policy that promotes collaboration and partnerships between schools and child care? How can it make sense, especially in these economic times, to build another layer of before- and after-school programs when so many already exist? And why would the government turn away from the community it has already invested so many resources in?

And so, we are recommending that Bill 242 be amended to allow boards to partner with community agencies in the delivery of before- and after-school programs for all-aged children.

The second area is around financial impact and what the impact will be. Based on the current financial model, to be sustainable, child care programs rely on a mix of age cohorts to be both viable and affordable to parents. Based on our preliminary estimates, the removal of four- and five-year-olds will result in increased parent fees in the range of between 10% to 25%.

Therefore, as a result of the transfer of the four- and five-year-olds to the education sector, coupled with the imminent termination of federal dollars for Best Start, a true financial crisis is looming, and this is only with partial implementation.

If school boards must directly operate the before- and after-school programs for children aged four and five, as currently mandated by Bill 242:

- child care will require substantially more stabilization dollars;

- centres will incur deficits that could be as high as 25% of their operating budget, and this magnitude of deficit cannot be absorbed and is simply not sustainable for a not-for-profit organization;

- parent fees will significantly increase, making care unaffordable for many families;

- child care centres may close; and

- there will be a net loss of child care spaces for all age groups in the GTA.

We are here today to tell you that this does not need to be the result of implementing full-day learning and of Bill 242. However, if Bill 242 is passed as drafted, these impacts will be irreversible and the price tag for full-day learning will exponentially increase.

The government has acknowledged that as a consequence of full-day learning, funding will be needed to stabilize the child care sector. To date, we have not had confirmation that this funding is available, or how much that funding will be.

The government, therefore, needs to immediately announce sufficient and appropriate multi-year funding to stabilize the sector and ensure the provision of quality child care to children aged zero to 3.8.

Full-day learning should not be achieved at the expense of the children and families who rely on quality child care for preschool-aged children.

Third, and finally, Bill 242 introduces a number of amendments to the Education Act, the Day Nurseries Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act. It is far-reaching in scope. It goes beyond granting legislative authority for full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. It grants considerable power to the minister to issue guidelines and policies on the operation of extended day programs, thereby exempting them from the standards and regulations under the Day Nurseries Act.

Bill 242, if passed, will impact the model of early learning and care for all children. Therefore, we believe it needs broader consultation with the community. We need to be a part of a broader discussion on what the framework is for children aged zero to 12. This is important public policy.

We understand that September 2010 is around the corner. We are certain that the amendments we are recommending will ensure a successful transition for full-day learning.

Full-day learning is great policy. Let's make sure we get it right. We can then turn our collective minds to what needs to be done to ensure a quality framework is developed for children zero to 12.

The Quality Early Learning Network, with the YMCAs of Ontario and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, has drafted specific amendments that we have distributed to you today.

We ask that you amend Bill 242 to specifically include not-for-profit community providers as partners in the Education Act; that you change the definition of "extended day programs;" that it permit school boards to partner with community providers for before- and after-school programs for four- and five-year-olds; that it permit school boards to partner with community providers for the delivery of programs for children aged six to 12; that it require regulations for all matters dealing with the extended day programs, as opposed to ministerial guidelines and policies.

1520

A strong and healthy child care sector will ensure the success of full-day learning programs for four- and five-year-olds, as it will ensure that they are developmentally prepared for the school setting. To succeed, we must build on current partnerships, recognizing that both systems provide essential services for children and families in Ontario.

Thank you for this opportunity to present. We're happy to respond to any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Filger. We have about 15 seconds per side.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to tell you that, in my experience, governments make very few changes to their bills. I urge you to continue to write letters to the minister and to the Premier so that you can be heard.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): To the government side.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: We have a system that has evolved over the years, and there was a need for child care, and groups like the non-profit sector stepped into the void. We all hoped we'd get a national child care strategy. That didn't come. If we have a system that has evolved—

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

Ms. Witmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would just say thank you very much. The 15 seconds isn't a lot of time, but we appreciate your presence.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Filger, for your deputation and presence on behalf of Quality Early Learning Network.

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS OF CANADA

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I'd now invite our next presenters to please come forward. Ms. Jolliff and Ms. Morris of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada. You have likely seen the protocol. You have 10 minutes in which to make your combined presentation. Any time remaining will be distributed amongst the parties for questions. As we have a huge number of presenters, we'll be enforcing the time with military precision. I'd invite you to please begin now.

Ms. Sandra Morris: Good afternoon. My name is Sandra Morris. I'm the regional director, central region, for Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada. I'm accompanied today by my colleagues, Harold Parsons, the executive director of the Boys and Girls Club of Kingston; and Duane Dahl, the assistant director of Boys and Girls Clubs of Hamilton.

Boys and Girls Clubs are leading providers of before- and after-school programs that support the healthy physical, educational, emotional and social development of young people. Our 25 local clubs serve more than 110,000 children per year at more than 160 locations across Ontario.

Consistent with our whole-child, life-cycle approach, these young people participate in programs ranging from licensed child care, to high-quality before- and after-school and summer programs for school-aged children, to youth leadership programs and initiatives.

Children, youth and families rely on us to provide programs that make a lasting, positive difference in the lives of Ontario young people, with many young people establishing a lifelong connection to their local club.

Our curriculum-based programs are offered in a variety of settings, including schools, social housing, recreation centres and Boys and Girls clubhouses, with more than 40% of our programs now offered in schools, and clubs providing seamless transitions from schools to other settings through safe walk and busing programs.

Boys and Girls Clubs partner with many of the organizations that are here today, and we're pleased to be working with several of these organizations on this important issue.

So why are we here? Boys and Girls Clubs support Ontario's goal of establishing a full-day learning system and making this system available to all four- and five-year-olds. We recognize that the proposed full-day learning system will result in significant new provincial investments in extended day programs for four- and five-year-olds, and commend the province for taking action to make these programs available to all children and families.

We are here today because, like other organizations, we have serious concerns with the implementation plan for full-day learning reflected in Bill 242, and we believe we have insights to help make this bill better for children and families.

We have three main concerns with the bill as now drafted:

(1) It requires that school boards shall operate extended day programs for four- and five-year-olds, thereby preventing boards from partnering with community organizations;

(2) It states that boards are authorized to operate programs for school-aged children, while not indicating that they may partner with local community providers in doing so; and

(3) If enacted as now drafted, it would result in the loss of existing critical program spaces, and require additional funding to stabilize the sector.

We would like to speak to each of these issues individually, but would note before doing so that with our partner organizations, the YMCA Ontario and Quality Early Learning Network, we are tabling proposed amendments to the legislation aimed at addressing these issues and strengthening the bill for children, families and communities.

Ontario's current system of extended day programs for young people includes hundreds of high-quality child care and early learning programs for four- and five-year-olds delivered by community organizations, both in school settings and outside of them. As now drafted, Bill 242 would require school boards to operate extended day

programs for four- and five-year-olds in schools even if a community-based organization was operating an extended day program for four- and five-year-olds in the same school. Community organizations would be prevented from bringing their expertise to the new system and working with the province to achieve key goals for the full-day learning system. If enacted as drafted, these provisions would serve to destabilize the child care and community sector and result in the loss of existing critical spaces for children and families.

We are also concerned, in the absence of details about the new fee structure and subsidy system, that the requirement for boards to provide extended day programs on a cost-recovery basis could result in a two-tier system in which low-income children and families are unable to participate.

Boys and Girls Clubs is particularly concerned about the provisions in Bill 242 related to extended day programs for school-aged children. At first glance, these provisions appear to simply codify the right that school boards now have to operate extended day programs for school-aged children—while not clearly indicating that boards may partner with community organizations in doing so. In fact, if the definition of extended day programs in Bill 242, as now drafted, was not amended and a school board decided to operate an extended day program for school-aged children, it would be prevented from partnering with community organizations in the delivery of that program—which would, by definition, be board-operated. The unintended negative impact of this section would be to discourage school boards from partnering with community providers, and community providers from continuing to operate programs for school-aged children, resulting in a loss of current spaces and choice for parents and families.

We are also concerned that Bill 242 broadens the full-day learning system to include programs for six- to 12-year-olds when the unique requirements of programs for school-aged children are not identified. For example, though the bill indicates that extended day programs for four- and five-year-olds would be staffed by early childhood educators, it does not outline the staffing requirements for programs for school-aged children, which differ from those for younger children.

Boys and Girls Clubs has worked with schools, school boards and a wide array of other community partners to provide programs for school-aged children, and we believe that our role and expertise—and that of other community partners—will be essential to help achieve key goals for the new full-day learning system.

In recent months, we have been delighted to expand our after-school programs for school-aged children and make these programs available to more Ontario young people with assistance from the \$10-million Ontario after-school framework and strategy, launched by the Ministry of Health Promotion in collaboration with the community sector and other provincial ministries, including the Ministry of Education. We believe that this initiative, which combines broad provincial goals for the

after-school system for school-aged children with active local community partnerships, could be expanded to achieve key goals for the full-day learning system for children aged six to 12 quickly, cost-effectively and efficiently, in a way that both draws upon and reinforces active community partnerships for young people.

Whether the Ontario after-school strategy is expanded or not, we are requesting, with our partner organizations, an amendment to Bill 242 to allow school boards the option to enter into and continue to build partnerships with community providers.

As other organizations have indicated, the implementation of Bill 242 as now drafted will destabilize the existing system of quality child care and extended day programs for children and result in the loss of existing critical spaces and programs. To avoid this circumstance and the need for increased stabilization funding for the sector, Boys and Girls Clubs and our partner organizations are requesting specific amendments outlined in the document that we are tabling with the committee today.

We believe that the responsibility of achieving the goals of the full-day learning system cannot be achieved by any single institution, ministry of government or community organization acting alone, but will instead require the expertise and collaboration of non-profit agencies, parents, families, ministries of government and other community partners working together under a single provincial framework in local communities across Ontario. Our requested amendments are predicated on that belief.

1530

Boys and Girls Clubs are committed to helping the government achieve its goal of implementing a new full-day learning system. We have a more than 100-year history of providing comprehensive, integrated, high-quality before- and after-school programs for young people and want to be part of transforming the current system to meet the goals of the full-day learning plan while meeting the needs of children, families and communities.

We thank committee members for their time, and we'd be pleased to take any questions you might have.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Morris. Again, 30 seconds or so per side. To the government, Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Well, in 30 seconds I can thank you. Obviously this deals with four- and five-year-olds. You also deal with zero- to 3.8-year-olds and six- to 12-year-olds. What plans do you have for those age groups as this moves on?

Ms. Sandra Morris: I referenced the after-school strategy launched by the Ministry of Health Promotion. I think that particular strategy provides an example of a collaborative approach in which the community sector was involved with the province and with outside experts in a provincial framework, provincial goals that draw on our expertise about community delivery—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I apologize, Ms. Morris; I'll need to intervene there. Ms. Witmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I appreciate the fact that you have joined with the YMCAs and the Quality Early Learning Network. I do think that, certainly, your concerns are similar. I think it would be incumbent upon the government to give serious consideration. I thought I heard Mr. Ramal say that maybe that was indeed going to be happening. I think it's critical to any success that we would hope to enjoy as a result of this initiative.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): M. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The concerns are valid. We're hearing it constantly now. I suspect that's what we'll hear for the next couple of days. I just urge you to be vigilant. I urge you to keep writing letters to the Minister of Education and to the Premier. As much as I like these guys, we can't rely on them to listen to all the recommendations you're making.

Interjections.

Ms. Sandra Morris: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thanks to you, Ms. Morris, and to your colleagues, for your representation, deputation and written submission on behalf of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada.

FAYWOOD BOULEVARD CHILD CARE

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I'd now invite Ms. Cullen of the Faywood Boulevard Child Care. Welcome, Ms. Cullen. I invite you to please begin now.

Ms. Kim Cullen: My name is Kim Cullen. I'm a grandparent of two young children, a registered early childhood educator and the executive director of a non-profit centre run by a parent board of directors that offers quality care to over 100 children each year. The centre is located in a Toronto District School Board elementary school. I have been in the field for over 20 years.

Full-day learning, as it appears to be rolling out, and Bill 242 are two of the biggest mistakes the government is making, and both will have negative impacts on the young children in our province. Dr. Charles Pascal provided the province with a report that appeared to be a solid foundation for the young children in our province to have equal opportunities for equal learning. Unfortunately, after the delivery of the report, the province rushed into moving ahead with full-day learning and has not delivered it with the best interests of the children in mind. Bill 242 will provide full-day child care for children, but will it really provide the opportunity for children to have access to full-day quality learning programs? Will the extended day offered be a safe and nurturing environment for young children?

Teachers and trained registered early childhood educators working collaboratively together to facilitate the learning of four- and five-year-olds appear to be a solid professional team to deliver a program that will prepare four- and five-year-old children with the skills necessary to enter grade 1. Unfortunately, Bill 242 permits boards to grant a letter of permission to untrained people to work with a teacher in the class, and this is evident throughout the bill. We should not allow the bill to pass its third

reading. The children of Ontario deserve to be offered quality early learning programs where they are actually having the opportunity to be educated by a professional team and not simply placed in a room with one teacher and an untrained person.

The boards are looking at a class size of 26 up to 29 children in one room; today, I'm hearing possibly 32 children. It may sound good to you, but what happens when you have one child with special needs or a severe behaviour problem or who's not fully toilet trained? Now you have one staff member dealing with that child while the other is trying to supervise the remainder of the group.

Currently, I supervise a program of four- and five-year-olds with a class size of 18 and two trained staff. The staff are extremely busy working one on one with each and every child daily to ensure that the children enter grade 1 with good self-esteem and the skills necessary for successful learning.

All of our children can read, but reading is not the only skill a child needs to be successful. It would be impossible for children in a group size of even 26 to have the same quality of program, especially when you allow untrained people to work in the classroom. Untrained people do not have the behaviour management experience and the skills to manage a class of four- and five-year-old children.

The extended day program should be required to fall under the current legislation of the Day Nurseries Act. Let me emphasize the word "current," because the proposed change to ratios is ridiculous—and that is a whole other discussion. The current act is in place to ensure safe and quality care of all children currently in licensed child care. Four- and five-year-olds should not lose quality care, which is likely to happen if Bill 242 passes. The province should insist that any extended day program fall under the current legislation of the Day Nurseries Act. We should not let Bill 242 pass final reading with the current language if we want to provide a safe and nurturing environment for four- and five-year-olds.

Extended day programs should not be left to the principals or someone the board designates. These programs should be managed by professionals who are currently in the field of early childhood education. They have years of experience ensuring quality care for children and can provide leadership and training to staff. Directors of child care centres are currently required to have a minimum of two years' experience and have to be approved by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. They have the time to establish working relationships with parents, which enables them to support the family with payment options, suggestions for behaviour management, discussions on family events that could affect the child, etc.

Current child care centres should continue to operate the extended day program for four- and five-year-olds and all children who require safe, quality and nurturing care. Why would the province of Ontario tear apart a system that works well for children and families? We should not let Bill 242 destroy our current child care system.

It is the law to call the children's aid society when you suspect abuse. In a resource manual, *Making a Difference: The Community Responds to Child Abuse*, there's a definition: "Neglect is defined as the chronic inattention or omission on the part of the caregiver to provide for the basic emotional and/or physical needs of the child, including food, clothing, nutrition, adequate supervision, health, hygiene, safety, medical and psychological care, and education." Emotionally neglected children do not receive the necessary psychological nurturance to foster their growth and development. The consequences of neglect can be very serious, particularly for young children. A child who does not receive adequate emotional, cognitive and physical stimulation, physical care and nutrition will lag in development. These lags in development may be irreversible.

Bill 242 is jeopardizing the health and safety and potential learning for our children. Nutrition has not been considered. What about the child who has an anaphylactic reaction to certain kinds of foods? If children are bringing lunch and snacks into the room, how will you protect that child? How will two staff members—one, if the other is busy—protect that child from being exposed to a food allergen during the lunch period during full-day learning from having a reaction and possibly dying?

This bill is putting our young children at risk. Think about your own children, your nieces, nephews and grandchildren. You would want what is best for them. So please do what is best for all children and do not let this bill go forward. Remember: What harm we do now will not be reversible later. Full-day learning and care should set children up for success and not failure in the future.

Please do not pass this bill without further consideration. The future of our young children is in jeopardy, and there should be more time and consideration taken to revisit the language that is currently in this bill. Passing this bill will not be equitable for families that do not have the financial means to make the choice between public education and private education where the ratios would be better.

1540

Every child should have the right to quality early learning and care in an environment that is safe, staffed with professionals and has smaller class sizes. The rollout of the early learning program and the passing of Bill 242 will be nothing but free, poor-quality, all-day child care between the hours of 9 and 3. Charging parents a fee to leave their children in a poorly run extended care program is not responsible.

The cost for school boards to recover the cost of child care will create much higher fees for parents, because there will be higher staff salaries and union contracts that will require boards to use their services for everything from painting to changing a light bulb. It cost our centre \$8,000 to paint two classrooms and \$775 to install the dishwasher, because we are located in a TDSB building and are required to use their unionized employees. And the list goes on.

Fortunately, there are some things we can do on our own, but if the school board is running the centre, it will

have to use unionized school board employees for every job and supply that is required, and that will drive up the cost of recovery significantly.

Leave extended care to the professionals who have been providing it for years, and give parents the confidence in our government that the best interests of children are being taken into consideration. Do not let this bill pass its final reading.

In summary, we should revisit the language in the bill to look at establishing smaller class sizes; to ensure a safe and nurturing environment where all children will actually learn and not fall under neglectful conditions; to make it mandatory that any programs, whether all day or extended day, are required to meet the current legislation of the Day Nurseries Act; and to remove school boards as being required to run extended day programs. Current child care centres should continue to offer these programs. We shouldn't tear apart a system that is already working, at the expense of children. We should revisit the idea of school boards running child care, as parents cannot afford to pay more for child care fees.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): On behalf of all members of the committee, I thank you for your presence and your deputation and submission today.

BUILDING STRONGER FUTURES

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I'd now invite our next presenters, Ms. Fleming and Ms. Juana Maria Diaz, of Building Stronger Futures, to please come forward. Welcome, and please begin.

Ms. Juana Maria Diaz: Good afternoon. With me today is Christine Fleming. We are concerned parents and members of a group called Building Stronger Futures.

Building Stronger Futures is a group led by parents and tenants of Toronto Community Housing. We have come together, because we are concerned about the healthy development of our children and the million children who are always left behind across Ontario by a lack of long-term stable funding for children's programs. We are calling on the province to implement a full-day, full-year learning program for all of Ontario's children, including the often forgotten middle years.

We acknowledge the step the government has taken toward implementing full-day kindergarten, but our concern is about children in the middle years—those children who are between the ages and six and 12—being left behind. These are critical years in a child's development, and the province cannot leave a programming gap between early childhood and youth if we want steps such as all-day kindergarten to be effective.

As parents and tenants, we experience the lack of middle childhood programs first-hand. We know the stress families experience as we struggle to find and afford quality children's programs while balancing the demands of work and family. It's hard to be a single mom who has to start working at 7 a.m. and get home by 4:15, knowing that our kids get home by 3:30. We know

what it's like to have to work long hours at more than one job to make sure that we pay our bills and to not have time to take our kids to the park; to not have money to pay for our kids to be in programs where they learn, have fun and socialize. This is during the time when children are in school. What about during school breaks, like last week, March break, or summer break? What do our children do then? Where do our children go? What do our children do? How do we parents continue to work when we are always worried about where our children are and if they are safe? We know that the need for a full-day program is immediate, and we urge the province to address this issue with a dedicated funding strategy and real commitment in Bill 242.

We are here today because we are concerned not only about our children and families in Toronto Community Housing, but because we are concerned about all the families and millions of children across this province. Too many of us struggle during times like these to find quality, affordable and accessible children's programs. We are here today to call on the provincial government to make sure that children between the ages of six and 12 are not forgotten in this province—as they have been for years—and that full-day learning is seen as a continuum of care for our children, not as a threat to our already struggling child care, early years and youth programs. We need to make sure that all children are a priority in this province.

Ms. Christine Fleming: We know that it might seem like we're asking for a lot, to expect that the province will make all children between the ages of zero and 12 a priority right now. We know that it might look like being unreasonable, because of the economy. But what we also know is that there is really a good plan and strategy that has already been created.

Our Premier appointed Dr. Charles Pascal to be his special adviser on early childhood learning. In June 2009, Dr. Pascal presented his report titled *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*. Dr. Pascal said in his report that the province should create a continuum of early learning child care and family support for children, from the prenatal period through youth, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education. When we look at what is being proposed in Bill 242, we see that a million Ontario children between the ages of six and 12 years are still being left behind, in need of the stable, dedicated out-of-school program that Pascal recommends.

Many children in this age group are not old enough to be left at home alone. This is leaving working families to contend with a patchwork of services. Children are often left in the care of older siblings, who shoulder an unfair burden as a result of a lack of programs. Unlike youth and children in their early years, one million children aged six to 12 across Ontario are being left behind. Not having middle childhood programs threatens our children's safety, development and preparation to face the challenges of their approaching teen years. We are already seeing the effect of excluding the middle

childhood years for children and youth programs. How many more at-risk youth will result from leaving one million children behind?

1550

We acknowledge that the provincial government has taken some first steps towards implementing full-day kindergarten. We have also seen that the school boards will permit before-school and after-school programs for older children aged six to 12. But this is not enough. Just giving someone permission without the money or resources to carry it through is not a good enough plan.

We are sure that every school will want to have an out-of-school program, but expecting schools to pay for the program—and what if there is the need of an out-of-school program but the school does not accept it? In the end, it's always our children who suffer.

We also are concerned that these first steps come at the expense of many other children. We see child care spaces threatened. We do not want to see priorities shift to different age groups. We want to see our children be a priority in this province.

Mr. Pascal says that to apply his whole strategy would probably cost about \$790 million to \$990 million. We know that's a lot of money. We've been told by some MPPs, when we have been meeting with them to talk about this, that there just isn't money to make this happen right now. But to people who tell us this cannot happen right now, we have two questions: How much more will it cost in the future if we continue to neglect one million children, and what is a child's potential worth these days?

We are not coming here today because we have all of the answers, but we have a need. Our children have a need. Children between the ages of six and 12 have been waiting far too long for this declaration of funding for affordable, accessible, quality out-of-school programs. We have added our voices to many others who are concerned about Ontario children—our children.

We remain Toronto Community Housing parents and tenants who are calling on the provincial government to implement all the recommendations in Pascal's report. This report outlines a strategy to ensure children in the middle years will finally no longer be left behind in Ontario.

Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Fleming, for your precision-timed remarks.

Remarks in Spanish.

HOME CHILD CARE ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I would now invite our next presenters to please come forward: Mr. Volonakis of the Home Child Care Association of Ontario, and colleague. I would respectfully invite you to please begin now.

Mr. Spyros Volonakis: Good afternoon. My name is Spyros Volonakis, and I'm here today with my colleague

Marni Flaherty. Thank you very much for the opportunity to present in front of you today.

The Home Child Care Association of Ontario applauds the government of Ontario for recognizing the critical importance of early learning and care for the well-being not only of children but of their families and our province as a whole. To that end, the association supports the principles of full-day early learning. However, the association is very concerned about the way in which the government is implementing this initiative.

We have a number of specific recommendations to make, and we would like to begin with these recommendations.

Amend subsection 259(1) to require boards of education to deliver the extended day component in partnership with not-for-profit community providers.

Add a clause to Bill 242 that states that existing dollars supporting the subsidy system in the licensed child care sector will remain within this sector, and that additional funds will be allocated to provide the subsidies that the act mentions, which will be necessary for some families to access the extended day program.

Amend Bill 242 to state explicitly that extended day programs for children aged six to 12 are to be delivered in partnership with not-for-profit community providers.

The Home Child Care Association of Ontario strongly supports the recommended amendments to Bill 242 that have been proposed by the Quality Early Learning Network, and urges you to consider acting upon these recommendations.

Who we are: We represent 75 licensed home child care agencies providing services across the province. These agencies refer children to 7,500 home child care providers who work with newborns to 12-year-olds. Agency staff support providers, parents and children with a range of services. Agency staff maintain regular contact with providers, ensuring that their operations comply with all requirements of the Day Nurseries Act and local government criteria.

A testament to the success of this licensed child care model is that upwards of 80,000 children are in this system. This is the choice of their parents. The Home Child Care Association's philosophy is anchored on the following principles:

- early learning programs must be high quality;
- parental choice is critical;
- the diversity of Ontario's families must be reflected in the early learning and care opportunities for children; and
- early learning and care programs are strengthened when all sectors actively collaborate. This includes a real role for not-for-profit community providers.

Ms. Marni Flaherty: Our concerns: Bill 242—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I'd just invite you to identify yourself, please. Everything said in this room becomes the permanent record of Parliament, so we need to identify people.

Ms. Marni Flaherty: Absolutely. Marni Flaherty.

Bill 242, as currently formulated, undermines some of these principles and sets the stage for the eventual elimination of licensed home child care. Two issues in particular stand out as overriding weaknesses.

First, the bill, as written, precludes partnership with community agencies. The consideration is very significant, because many families use licensed home child care because they work non-traditional hours and it is the only type of care that can accommodate their child care needs. While there is no indication that school boards will offer extended day programs beyond the traditional before- and after-school hours, if home child care becomes financially unviable for providers, it won't be long before licensed home child care ceases to exist as an option. By contrast, if schools could develop partnerships with agencies, they could capitalize on the existing operations to focus on what inevitably will be their primary concern: the successful implementation of full-day early learning.

There is an existing infrastructure in many communities that delivers high-quality before- and after-school care. The licensed home child care sector is part of that system. It does not make sense to reinvent the wheel and set up a parallel system. Perhaps more significantly, the spirit of the proposed bill suggests that it is simple to set up before- and after-school care, such that schools can, in effect, proceed with double initiatives: a full day of learning and child care. With the greatest respect, this is both naive and short-sighted. More significantly, such double efforts may undermine both initiatives.

In light of these concerns, the Home Child Care Association is suggesting that Bill 242 be amended to encourage community partnerships. Separate and apart from what additional regulations and processes the ministry might implement, there ought to be provisions in the legislation that expressly require community partnerships. There is really no limit to the creativity over the types of partnerships that might be pursued, and indeed, these may range vastly from community to community. It is also possible that in areas where there is no community infrastructure, school boards might be the best option for delivery of the extended child care. But in those areas where there is an existing infrastructure, boards and non-for-profit community providers should be required to collaborate and provide an integrated program.

The lack of clarity about how the system for six- to 12-year-olds will be managed creates further stress on families and on the community providers that support them. School boards should partner with community providers for the delivery of extended day programs before and after school for children aged six to 12, and for professional development days and summer programs for all school-aged children from four to 12 years old.

The bill is not clear about how the subsidy system will work. The subsidy system must be available to all eligible children, regardless of the child care model they may choose.

The bill also proposes changes to the Day Nurseries Act, the Education Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act. The Home Child Care Association is of the

view that the Day Nurseries Act needs serious updates and revisions. To that end, the association has been working with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to address some of the challenges in the act.

1600

The government did not engage a process with consultation and preparation from the relevant stakeholders regarding Bill 242. This is important public policy. It requires a broader consideration with the community. Let's turn our collective minds to ensuring that a quality framework is developed.

Mr. Spyros Volonakis: Mr. Chair and committee members, the Home Child Care Association of Ontario supports the introduction of full-day early learning for all children 3.8 to five years old in Ontario, and it looks forward to working with the partners in the education and children's services sector to make this initiative a success.

The association believes that this initiative can be rolled out in a way that builds on the strengths of the existing licensed child care sector and that the recommendations as presented will go a long way to allow for the success of full-day early learning for four- and five-year-olds.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to present today.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): We'll have about 30 seconds per side, beginning with Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think my colleague has a better question than I do.

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: There have been a number of people who have raised the question today that this will severely impact the private daycare operators. We know that there are numerous people on the wait-lists—I've heard as many as 15,000—waiting for subsidies and stuff in Toronto, up to 70,000 across the province. Do you think that this plan, by having a full day, will help eliminate some of the backlog that currently exists?

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I'm afraid that question will have to remain rhetorical. To the PC side: Mrs. Witmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Sure. I'll take on Mr. Johnson's question, and you can answer it.

Mr. Spyros Volonakis: Sure. It appears that there are many, many children on the waiting list; however, the system is very vulnerable when we lose the four- and five-year-olds—that's number one. Number two, as we speak, we provide, as non-profit community agencies, child care in partnership with schools and communities. Why not continue doing that, as we have been doing that for so many years.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I think a big part of your focus is the extended programs, before school and after school. Both of you were saying that if you can't provide those programs, some of those that are affiliated with you might not be able to survive. Is that correct?

Mr. Spyros Volonakis: That's part of the reason, but the other piece is that we have been there. We are there right now—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, I understand. But are some of you threatened, seriously?

Mr. Spyros Volonakis: We are, because if we lose the four- and five-year-olds, the—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): With respect, I'll need to intervene there, Mr. Marchese. I thank you, Mr. Volonakis, and you, Ms. Flaherty, for your deputation and presence on behalf of the Home Child Care Association of Ontario.

Just before we call the next presenters, I would like to acknowledge for the committee and all of those present the presence of Mr. Charles Beer, former member of provincial Parliament, who served this Legislature and Ontarians from 1987 to 1995. Welcome, Mr. Beer.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I'd now invite our next presenters to please come forward, Mr. Coran and Mr. Leckie of the OSSTF, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, and colleague. I invite you to please begin now.

Mr. Ken Coran: Ken Coran. I'm the president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. Beside me to my immediate right is Dale Leckie. Dale is our director of protective services; he is also the chair of our early learning program coordinating committee. To my far right is Brad Bennett. Brad is formerly from the Greater Essex County District School Board. They did have a successful JK-SK program a number of years ago, and he has been very influential in earlier discussions with Charles Pascal and the development of the program. So, between the three of us, we're hoping to try to touch bases on a few things.

We're going to do it in basically two stages. The first stage will be to focus on the bill itself, because there are some concerns based on previous legislation that the government passed back in 2007, the Early Childhood Educators Act and the College of Early Childhood Educators, with this new legislation. So we'll look at that briefly and we'll also look at some of the problems that we can see down the road with regard to the implementation.

I'll turn it over to Dale Leckie, first of all.

Mr. Dale Leckie: Thanks, Ken. I will say from the outset that OSSTF was in favour of Dr. Charles Pascal's position on early learning and the early learning plan. OSSTF already represents early childhood educators who are working the field and early childhood educators who are working as education assistants, doing a similar job as the proposed early learning plan.

We also want to emphasize two pieces that are essential for the success of the plan. Number one is that it is a team approach that is used for the plan and, number two, that it's a seamless day, from the before and after program and the instructional day.

As far as the bill goes, there are a couple of issues that we want to clarify. It does say in a number of places in the bill that there is in each class a certified teacher and a

designated early childhood educator. There are some concerns out there that we have heard, that there was going to be some class size threshold to apply the team approach. We want it to be very clear that this program runs and is successful and has credibility when both members of the team are delivering the program. We know there are a number of areas of funding that are of concern, but if there is a concern about enough kids in a class, for example, to make the team approach viable, we have to look at combining the classes, possibly, of JK and SK, in order to maintain the team that is presenting the program, as opposed to creating a class size threshold that brings the ECE in as an enhancement.

Another issue that presents itself is the definition and the roles of the two jobs. I know it is clear in the bill that it references a qualified teacher as “teaching” and the designated early childhood educator as “working.” I think that’s an important designation, but I also think that the bill, through regulation or policy, needs more clarification. We agree that there are distinct duties that the teacher has in the program and distinct duties of the early childhood educator. In the description and the fact that they’re both members of education-type colleges, we do think that there could be some areas of conflict, possibly, and overlap as part of the program.

We understand there needs to be flexibility, we understand there needs to be the ability for the members of the team to design a program that’s going to suit their needs, but we think there have to be clear duties assigned and we need both members of the team to report to the same supervisor—the principal of the school—and, in the definition you have in the bill, to coordinate and co-operate. It shows in section 264.1 “the duty of the following persons to coordinate.” There is some risk, we feel, both being members of separate colleges, if a complaint goes to the College of Teachers or the College of Early Childhood Educators, that the other team member will refuse to co-operate, that there should be some penalty laid. We think there has to be some clarification that a dispute over co-operation might be a difficult one to deal with at one of the particular colleges.

We also feel that in the bill there has to be some recognition of the other additional services that the kids in the program may need, additional professional support personnel, additional special ed expertise, that sort of thing.

I will pass it on to Brad Bennett, who can talk about an established program that we have up and running.

Mr. Brad Bennett: Thanks, Dale. Brad Bennett.

Just from my perspective, we’ve been out there making contact with school boards in anticipation of the legislation, and just a week ago Friday we reached our first agreement with a school board as to what the program would look like, assuming it looks like it does in the current bill.

1610

The federation has said from the beginning that there would be cooperation working with school boards to make sure that this thing rolls out. There are concerns, as

Dale mentioned, in particular funding concerns, but in discussions that we’ve had with school boards, in particular where we’ve reached agreements, it looks like this thing should be successful. We just have to really look at the issues that Dale mentioned along the way, but it’s certainly not out of the realm of possibility to make it work, and work well.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, gentlemen. A minute per side, Ms. Witmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: If I hear you clearly—all afternoon I’ve been hearing from daycare providers and the Y and the Boys and Girls Clubs indicating that if they’re not allowed to continue to provide the before and after care, the provision of some of the child care services they offer will be in jeopardy. But I think what I’m seeing is that you don’t support that continuation. You see this being a role within the school.

Mr. Dale Leckie: We think there are tremendous advantages to being in the school to provide the before and after program. We think that there are assets in the physical school building that can be used—the library, the gymnasium etc. We also think that the seamless day is the flow from before school into the instructional day with the same early childhood educator who is going to move through. We think that child shouldn’t notice when the early bell rings, that that play-directed program that is going to move through the—

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You raise some good questions, and I suspect many of these questions can be resolved. I really believe that, although there are some other difficult areas that may not be so easily resolved. One of them is class size. For me, an average class size of 26 is a great number. It’s an average, which means it could be 30 or it could be 32. There’s no cap. We have a cap on primary grades, but there’s no cap here, which suggests to me that they want class sizes to be a bit higher than the average of 26. I’m seriously concerned about that. Do you have an opinion on that?

Mr. Dale Leckie: We’re absolutely concerned. We think there should be a hard cap on the class size. You have to understand the 13-to-1 adult ratio that’s described in some of the documentation doesn’t necessarily mean that there are going to be 13 in one group and 13 in another group. I think the 13-to-1 ratio is going to allow the teacher to be with a group of students—

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: If I understand what you said, you support the bill but you think that we should consider some changes, and I guess it’s our job to consider those changes. But sometimes you sort of get into the weeds on these things—and you want to get into the weeds because that’s where the changes are made. But it is, at the end of the day, all about kids.

From your experience, the kids that have gone through the enhanced and the robust JK and SK, how does that manifest itself by the time they get to secondary school?

Mr. Brad Bennett: Well, I don't have hard data on this, only anecdotal from speaking with people who were involved with the program when it was previously much like this, with the teacher-ECE team, and then, because of funding restraints, it went back to being just a teacher model. Those working with the children said that it was absolutely night and day. There was a loss to the program and to the educational opportunities.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: So it had been a tremendous positive.

Mr. Brad Bennett: Absolutely.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I need to intervene there. Thank you, Mr. Flynn, and thank you, Mr. Coran, Mr. Leckie and Mr. Bennett for your deputation on behalf of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

ATKINSON CENTRE FOR SOCIETY AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I would now invite our next presenters to please come forward, Ms. Janmohamed and Professor Corter of the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at OISE. Welcome, and please begin.

Ms. Zeenat Janmohamed: Thank you very much. I'm dying for a very cold drink. You must be really hot as well, and a bit tired, but thank you for having us here this afternoon. Congratulations to the government for thinking about a system reform that's unparalleled in the North American jurisdiction, and thank you to Mr. Marchese for all of your advocacy work as well.

We're sort of at a time when we are trying to move from fragmentational services into a more comprehensive approach, and there are going to be lots of bumps along the road. I'm really glad that my colleagues this afternoon have raised their concerns. My task today is to share with you some of the lessons we have learned from Toronto First Duty.

Toronto First Duty is a children's service delivery model that combines education, child care, family support and health services. For almost a decade, now, Toronto First Duty sites have served as a laboratory for people to come and actually touch, feel and see how an integrated model works. The research is conducted out of the Atkinson Centre at OISE/University of Toronto, and I am one of many people involved. My colleague Carl Corter, who is the principal investigator, couldn't come this afternoon, and so my apologies on his behalf.

TFD helped to inspire the appointment of Dr. Pascal as the minister's adviser on the best way to implement early learning in Ontario, and out of that, you're very familiar with the report that came out: *With Our Best Future in Mind*.

We see the full-day early learning program as a bridgehead to try to create system-wide change for children between zero and 12, and we encourage policy-makers and the implementation teams to carefully consider the lessons we have learned and also to apply them

to these important education reforms you're making. We would welcome any of the committee members for a tour at Bruce/WoodGreen so you can actually see the model that is largely in place now. I want to share with you some key lessons, and I'd be happy to take questions after, if you have any.

In the Toronto First Duty model that is exemplified right now at Bruce/WoodGreen Early Learning Centre in a Toronto District School Board school, we bring together a partnership between a community service, the school board, the public health department and others to essentially create a team of educators that brings teachers, early childhood educators, teaching assistants, recreation and health professionals together to plan a more integrated model of early learning into a single pedagogical approach.

The educator team essentially reflects a whole-school approach, facilitating ongoing communication, planning and goal setting between professionals. One of the key findings we have discovered in this past year, in particular, is the absolutely critical and important nature of having the time together to meet and plan a curriculum as a team.

The other thing that has happened is that the early childhood educators, as a result of the partnership working with the teachers, can also spend some time in the upper grades, therefore facilitating some continuing support into the extended year and the summer programming. That extended day type of learning has been absolutely central to the cohesion that the children experience, and that the parents experience as well.

The Toronto First Duty research has shown us that with strong leadership from the principal as well as the early years coordinator, joint professional development and time for programming planning, the team is strengthened through a common pedagogy and curriculum approach in creating a learning environment that creates stronger links between parents and schools.

If Ontario's educational reforms are to fulfill their promise, then the working conditions of the educators must be conducive to each member of the educator team applying his or her knowledge to create a learning environment. This is absolutely essential in the Ontario context, where the majority of teachers do not have formal child development training, something that early childhood educators can bring to the program.

Having said that, the wage differentials between certified teachers and registered early childhood educators are expected because of differences in training; however, the significant salary differential that is being offered right now is absolutely incompatible with a learning environment where teachers and early childhood educators work side by side to deliver the program. School boards need to be resourced and directed to provide working conditions conducive to recruiting, retaining and building a strong educator team. Therefore, we recommend that the committee consider wages for early childhood educators that comply with pay equity requirements, and that an exclusive professional and employment classification for

early childhood educators working in the early learning and extended day and summer program also be considered.

The second lesson has to do with how an integrated approach to children's services encourages programming to meet the developmental needs of children. We've had the opportunity to see an absolutely terrific program in place that brings teacher education and early childhood education skills together, and it's an opportunity to think about how we can push back against developmentally inappropriate programming and move forward a more progressive vision of what learning ought to be, that makes children excited and makes parents more involved in their kids' programming.

1620

The seamless program that we have modelled at Toronto First Duty, and which will be implemented in all of the early learning programs in Ontario over the next four or five years, will blend childhood development, but at the core of expectations, it will deliberately and effectively support cognitive development and tap into children's individual interests, drawing out their capacities.

We therefore recommend that the committee also think about capping class sizes in the early learning program to 26 children during all hours of operation and also placing a time limit on exemptions for boards that are hiring staff without appropriate ECE qualifications. We are not in a position yet in Ontario where we have such a shortage of early childhood educators that we can't fill those positions; we believe that we can.

It's also important to direct the school boards to schedule adequate time for joint planning by the educators team. This is absolutely critical, and we've demonstrated in the Toronto First Duty program that it's central to effective programming.

The third lesson we've learned is that integrated early childhood service delivery reduces the daily stress and hassles that parents experience in family life. The reality is that 77% of Ontario's families with young children are in the workforce. This is simply the reality of the way that we live in Ontario. The level of stress that parents experience is significantly lower in an integrated model. The satisfaction that parents experience in terms of communication and support and the fewer transitions makes a big difference in the children's lives as well.

To that extent, we believe that year-round programming has been shown to be effective at reducing the achievement gap between children living in advantaged and disadvantaged circumstances. As summer learning losses accumulate over the years, disadvantaged students fall further and further behind. The issue we have at hand is that the government is offering the program for only 188 days of the year, and we've heard from the parents earlier today about the stress that's going to cause for them. Child care programs are not in a position to reserve space, nor are staff willing to cover off summer holidays. This is a huge gap in the way that the legislation has been designed at this point. We would strongly urge that the

legislation reflect the need for year-round programming to ensure optimal opportunities for all children and to support their families.

The fourth lesson is that integrated early learning delivery facilitates parent participation in their child's early learning. The Ministry of Education and the Premier of Ontario are very keen to have more parents participate in their children's learning, and we believe that the integrated model helps to do that.

In the research that we conducted, we found that the parents in the Toronto First Duty sites were more involved with their child's learning, felt better able to offer support and felt more empowered and responsible for speaking with program staff. For example, when parents of many children enrolled in the kindergarten-type program were asked, "When would you like to come in for your parent interview?" most of them said, "Actually, we feel like we talk to the teachers and the early childhood educators every day. We don't need to come in for a parent-teacher interview." That gives you a sense of their involvement and their commitment.

The Pascal report emphasizes parent involvement as a primary focus and advantage of the proposed educational reforms. Creating schools as neighbourhood centres for families from birth onward is a proven outreach strategy to both advantaged and disadvantaged families. We did not select Toronto First Duty sites only in disadvantaged communities; we wanted to exemplify how a model like this could work in all kinds of communities and that year-round programming attracts stable enrolment allowing cost efficiencies for both boards and parents. Therefore, we recommend that policy and legislation support the development of the child and family centres to accompany the rollout of the early learning program.

You have heard all afternoon about the impending crisis that's going to occur for child care programs and service providers. The Pascal report had two parts. It had the early learning program and the child and family centre—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Janmohamed. I'll need to intervene there and thank you on behalf of the committee for your deputation and written submission on behalf of the Atkinson Centre for Society and Children Development at OISE.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I would now invite our next presenter to please come forward, Mr. Tony Diniz of the Child Development Institute and colleague. I would invite you to be seated and please begin.

Ms. Nada Martel: Good afternoon, and thank you for this opportunity to present to the committee. My name is Nada Martel, and I'm here with Tony Diniz. We are both here this afternoon to represent the Child Development Institute, a not-for-profit organization fundamentally concerned with child development through the provision of early learning and care services; children's mental health and family violence services; and research and knowledge development.

The Child Development Institute operates eight early learning centres or child care centres in Toronto, and last year we celebrated 100 years of service to Toronto's children.

The Child Development Institute is part of the Quality Early Learning Network, which presented earlier this afternoon, and we completely support the brief and proposed amendments to the bill that have been developed by the Quality Early Learning Network, together with the YMCAs of Ontario and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario.

I want to say from the outset that we clearly support, in principle, full-day early learning for four- and five-year-old children. Having said this, we have some serious concerns, however, that we would like to emphasize.

Mr. Tony Diniz: Good afternoon. Bill 242 sets out for boards of education to be the sole provider for the extended day. We support the concept that there be the option—and I stress “the option”—for boards to collaborate with the not-for-profit sector to provide this service. We agree that a seamless experience is essential for children, but we believe that this can be accomplished through strong collaboration.

In our early learning services, we have three child care programs that are in schools, that are highly collaborative in nature and also link these students and their families to other community services that some families require. That collaboration works.

In our children's mental health and family violence services, we have on-site programs in over 25 TDSB and Toronto Catholic school boards, and the collaboration model works.

Does that mean that schools are to take over all other services, including children's mental health, and really move away entirely from a collaborative model? Rather than start from new, why not create an option to collaborate with existing proven services?

Like other providers, we are deeply concerned that an unintended consequence of full-day kindergarten is the serious financial destabilization of child care. Moving four- and five-year-old children to education and out of child care shakes the fundamental economics of a child care centre. This group of children softens the finances for the younger children, infant and toddler groups.

I can tell you that we have closely examined our own financial models, and when the four- and five-year-old children are in full-day early learning, we end up with a financial shortfall of between 10% and 25% for the centre. In many cases, adding more young children just makes this worse. The only outcome can be a price increase of 10% to 25%, or the closure of that centre and the loss of service to children and families.

As a not-for-profit organization, we are concerned about striking the balance, with competitive salaries for our important staff, but also with affordable fees for fee-paying families. Child care rates are already at a saturation level for families, and a possible fee increase of 10% to 25% will be, in our view, clearly over the top.

Now we have an additional major threat: the potential loss of 5,000 subsidies, which is 21% of the current system in Toronto. This poses major problems for organizations like ours who operate programs in disadvantaged communities and who are dependent on the availability of subsidy to serve children and families.

These two threats alone are very worrisome. Together, they truly constitute a perfect storm. We have a 21% reduction threat, because of the subsidy crunch, on top of a model, which is coming, which faces a 10% to 25% sustainability problem.

The child care system has been fragile but somehow resilient, but we can only ride out so many waves before the ship topples over. Two of our centres are closing this year because they're in schools named for full-day kindergarten in September. We now regard that all of our centres, with our understanding of this legislation and its possible actions and inactions, are at risk, including those providing vital services in Regent Park, St. James Town, and Parkdale.

Ms. Nada Martel: We feel that full-day early learning will be great if we proceed and address all of the issues in this initiative that have been identified. We just urge you to take a wider view and understand how this threatens the very delicate ecosystem of child care.

As a board member, I'm very proud of the work that we do, that our dedicated and skilled staff work every day to start children off on the right track at a key developmental time in their lives where this matters very much. Our staff support families and enable them to hold employment, to work or to attend school to improve their ability to participate in the work force and provide a stronger future for their children. This is right in line with the child development agenda, with the anti-poverty agenda and with building strong community roots.

1630

As a citizen board member of an agency concerned with child development, I urge this committee to adopt social policy that builds on community assets and promotes child development for all children, not just for some children and families at the cost of other children and families.

Thank you so much for this opportunity to express our views.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Martel and Mr. Diniz. We have about two minutes or so per side. To the government, Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for the presentation. I love the sentence, “The child care system has been fragile, but somehow resilient.” I support that. I think many people in the room don't have to go back too far to when it was still quite fashionable to call it government-funded babysitting. You don't have to go back too many years to find that as part of the lexicon.

The intent is to do the best thing for children, for four- and five-year-olds, but also to recognize the reality of the process that's evolved over the years. Are you saying that if we went to the system that you're proposing, that's the end of the road and that's the system we move to and

adopt? Or do we use the system that's evolved to, slowly and in a phased way, move our four- and five-year-olds into the education system?

Mr. Tony Diniz: It is complex, Mr. Flynn. I'm sure you understand that. The first issue is that there has to be some counterbalance to the economics of child care. If we are to have child care for the Best Start centres, the way they're funded right now, it simply doesn't work with this model. It really does present this 10% to 25% problem on top of other problems. If there's some way of addressing some of that shortfall for the early child care centres, Best Start centres—

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am wondering if you have done any modelling on if you were to continue with the collaborative model, where the Child Development Institute had the before and after and the summer programs—whether that model works from a business case.

Mr. Tony Diniz: In our situation—that may work for many other child care centres; it doesn't help us so much because of the neighbourhoods we're in and because we really don't provide services for kids six to 12 anyway. So we have other issues. But there are parts of the not-for-profit sector that that will help substantially.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Jones. Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry, I had to skip out while you did your presentation. There's only one of us on this side, so it's hard.

I missed the essential point, but I wanted to ask you to comment on the issue of class size, because I really believe, like the previous speaker, that there's got to be a cap. I already believe that 26 is a huge number when you consider that kids need a place to sleep, that there's got to be snack preparation and problems going to the washroom and other related problems. Do you think there should be a cap?

Mr. Tony Diniz: We really believe that the provisions of the Day Nurseries Act provide for essential safety and quality. There are caps: There are not guidelines; there are caps in that legislation. So by the same thinking, in my view, there should be the same caps in education as well for young children, given their vulnerabilities.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. You agree with that, I'm assuming. Thank you so much.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Mr. Marchese, and thanks to you, Ms. Martel and Mr. Diniz, for your deputation on behalf of the Child Development Institute.

CAMPAIGN 2000/FAMILY SERVICE TORONTO

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I would now invite our next presenter, Ms. Rothman of Campaign 2000/Family Service Toronto. Welcome. I invite you to

please be seated. We'll have that distributed. Please begin.

Ms. Laurel Rothman: I'm Laurel Rothman. I work at Family Service Toronto, a city-wide agency that serves thousands of families every year and is the host for Campaign 2000, a cross-Canada, non-partisan coalition with 67 partners in Ontario committed to ending child and family poverty in our province.

We appreciate a number of the steps that the Ontario government has taken over the past year to respond to some of our recommendations, including the poverty reduction strategy, with a target to cut child and family poverty by 25% by 2013, and the commitment to phase in full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds.

I should note that we, Campaign 2000, have been calling for almost two decades for a national system of universal early learning and child care services. Certainly, provinces have a leading role to play in both providing and funding these services. Our research has confirmed—as much other research has—that access to affordable, quality child care is a key pathway out of poverty for low-income families.

Regarding the bill: We support the bill in principle, as it implements the full-day learning program. It sets out important legislative changes to ensure that a universal program for four- and five-year-olds will be eventually available to children in every community across the province.

The amendments to the Education Act require that school boards operate an extended day program. However, from our perspective, the extended day program not operating all year round—or not mandated to, at this point—is a serious deficiency. It leaves our families, and we heard earlier that 77%—now I'm trying to remember. I think it's 77% of women with children under six are in the labour force in Ontario; I think that was the earlier statistic. So it leaves families without services during school holidays and in the summer and puts more pressure on a fragile network of child care services.

We'd like to see two amendments to subsection (4): The first, to ensure that the extended day programming for four- and five-year-olds runs all year, as the early learning adviser recommended to the Premier and, as we know, as the best systems internationally do operate. We'd also like to see an amendment that mandates that school boards provide a nutritious lunch—and I use the word “nutritious” recognizing that it may not always be able to be a hot lunch—and snacks to children in the early learning program, as is currently the requirement in licensed and regulated child care.

Let me go on to say that our current concerns regarding the funding for, if you will, the complementary network of services for children under four that is operated by licensed child care providers are serious. While we support the intent of the bill, we have strong concerns about insufficient funding to maintain the current, very fragile network of services and to ease that transition. Just imagine that if you were running a centre for 52 kids and you lost 40% of them because they went

off to kindergarten and all-day learning. In theory, that's great. What needs to happen and has not happened is that there be a clear plan, both design-wise and financially, to assist those programs to make that transition, whatever it may be; whether it becomes a smaller program or a different age mix, whatever. So that's one serious concern that we have.

We're particularly concerned about the expected loss of up to 7,600 child care subsidies if the March Ontario budget does not include at least \$64 million for subsidies and child care services. I know that there are many other needs, but influx of cash is essential for low- and modest-income families, who would be hurt the most if we lost subsidies. And do you know what? They're the very same families that the Ontario poverty reduction strategy is seeking to lift out of poverty. Access to affordable, quality child care is key to the Ontario government achieving its target of reducing child and family poverty by 25% by 2013.

I guess the other way to look at it is: You can't build a new second storey on a house—and let's think of the early learning program as indeed, a bright, shiny and comfortable, let's hope, beginning for full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds—on top of what we would say is a crumbling first floor of services for very young children. Two of your government's main social policy planks, the early learning program and the Ontario poverty reduction strategy, will falter seriously if child care is allowed to collapse.

So we're urging the Ontario government to ensure that the next budget includes additional transitional funding to ensure that the new full-day early learning program operates as the early learning adviser recommended and as intended, and to include at least \$64 million to maintain the child care subsidies for low- and moderate-income families.

Thank you.

1640

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Rothman. You have left a generous amount of time, about a minute and a half or so per side, beginning with Ms. Jones.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I had one question on your, "We would like to see an amendment to subsection (4) to ensure that extended day programming for four- and five-year-olds runs all year round." Why only four- and five-year-olds? The extended program would be up to 12.

Ms. Laurel Rothman: Oh, that's true. We would certainly support that. I think we're looking at basically the current phase that has been announced and committed to. Let's do what has been agreed upon well, for starters. In other words, we're just commenting on the specifics at this point. We do support, of course, the wide range of services up through 12, but right now let's do what we need to do for families with four- and five-year-olds so that they can stay in education training and the labour force throughout the year without disruption, dislocation and/or unaffordable services.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Laura, for reminding us about the fragility of child care services in

general—because that's what it is—and about the potential loss of the \$63 million and what that will do to child care and the loss of spaces.

There is talk of increasing the ratio, which worries a lot of people, and there is the loss of four- and five-year-olds from current programs into the child care system. People are saying, "You're providing a good service and you're going to kill another good service somewhere else." So it's a good reminder about the fragility, and Pascal talked about this. I think if the government implemented all the recommendations, we'd have fewer concerns. That's why people are here.

You raise many concerns, including that whole point of running all year round. I'm not sure where this is going to go, so I'm glad you're here. I'm glad you're lobbying all of us and I hope you continue lobbying the minister and the Premier on this matter.

Ms. Laurel Rothman: I just have to add that we in poverty reduction over that year and a half pushed hard and everybody said, "Just wait for the early learning report." It's here. So you've got to do it right.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Based on doing it right, I've got a very brief question and then I'm going to turn it over to Mr. McMeekin. There can be a snowball or a domino effect from this. People who are providing daycare right now to four- and five-year-olds are saying, "If you put these children in full-day learning, it's going to impact my operation. It's going to upset it. I'm going to have to change things. It may not even be viable."

If it went to full-day, full-year, what would that do to the summer programs that exist right now—the YMCA, for example, the town programs—where traditionally children have been spending their summers?

Ms. Laurel Rothman: I think those are good questions, but if we want to look at a fully integrated system, as the early learning adviser recommended, and we see schools as community hubs—remember, they may, in some large communities, not be the only service; in small communities, they probably could be the only service.

I have to be honest and say that I haven't looked at the exact details of the impact of the summer program. I'm thinking of children and families and what it means for them to continue their lives.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: It takes a village to raise a child. We've heard a lot about partnership today. Provincial governments like partners too. There was a time when we were able to partner with other levels of government.

Campaign 2000's goal for the last two decades has been the creation of a national system. What kind of progress are you making in your advocacy with the federal government?

Ms. Laurel Rothman: Not much, I think we'd all have to say, unfortunately.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I apologize; I'll have to intervene there. I thank Ms. Rothman for her deputation and presence on behalf of Campaign 2000/Family Service Toronto.

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC
EMPLOYEES, LOCAL 2484

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I would now invite our next presenter to please come forward, Ms. Teibo of CUPE Local 2484, the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Welcome. I'd invite you to please begin now.

Ms. Marsha Duncan: Hello. Thank you for allowing me to make a presentation today. My name is Marsha Duncan, and I'm taking the place of Janet Teibo. We represent CUPE Local 2484.

CUPE Local 2484 is a local of just over 300 child care workers here in Toronto. We provide services for approximately 3,000 children in 31 different child care centres. I am a registered early childhood educator and have resource teacher credentials as well. I have worked in the child care field for the last 10 years.

I am here today to let you know that we support the report, *With Our Best Future in Mind*, which was issued by Dr. Charles Pascal last June. Dr. Pascal spent almost two years consulting with teachers, parents and other stakeholders. The Pascal report sets out a vision for a comprehensive early learning childhood education system that included full-day learning programs with registered early childhood educators working as a team with certified teachers to provide a half-day, a regular day or extended day of high-quality early learning and care.

He identified that a key part of the plan must be that educators have child development knowledge and skills as well as effective skills in engaging parents' involvement.

The report validates the skills and capacity of early childhood educators. We are not child minders or babysitters. We plan programs to meet the needs of each individual child in a holistic manner geared to their social, physical, emotional and psychological needs. We must be considered equal partners and team members in the planning and implementing of the new curriculum. We are looking for the committee to ensure that these elements are included and recommended for Bill 242.

Any good legislation must have funding to ensure that it's successful. Dr. Pascal outlined an early childhood vision for all children from infants to 12-year-olds, and provided comprehensive plans of action. We must ensure that our system of early childhood learning and child care for all children is both sustained and strengthened.

Research has shown that children learn through play, but these programs must have higher staffing for supervision. The higher ratios in schools versus child care do not allow for a learning-through-play format.

Funding for full-day kindergarten and the extended day must be provided to ensure that the quality and ratios which are currently part of the Day Nurseries Act can be maintained. The DNA currently has ratios of 1 to 10 for four- and five-year-old kindergarten children. Under current education now planned, the traditional school model has one teacher and 20 children. While this may

have worked for half-day programs, it is not appropriate for full-day programs for four- and five-year-olds where the curriculum is planned in a holistic manner.

This means that your proposal for staffing for school and the extended day must be revised and an allowance made for smaller groups during the school day, and additional registered early childhood educators or EAs in any extended day program which has more than 12 children.

The Ministry of Education currently provides funding to school boards using a funding formula. Many school boards feel that the funding formula continues to have problems. We need to ensure that any new funding must include adequate amounts for current and grid increases in teacher salaries, both certified and registered early childhood education professionals; for professional development and training to ensure that the new curriculum is child-friendly and appropriate; adequate funding for accessing services for children with special needs; and the subsidies for parents who qualify for extended day assistance must come from new monies, not those monies currently allocated to the child care system.

This is an exciting time for education and children's services. This is your opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of Ontario families and children. It will only be a success if you follow Dr. Pascal's report. His report was not only a plan for full-day learning kindergarten, but a comprehensive early childhood learning education system.

In particular, we ask that as you make your changes to the Education Act, you ensure that the community-based child care services that currently serve four- and five-year-old children are supported to serve younger children and families, with affordable parent fees, decent wages for staff, and expanded services for children and families.

Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you very much, Ms. Teibo. We have about two minutes or so for questions. Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry, is it Janet Teibo or—

Ms. Marsha Duncan: I am replacing Janet.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Oh, Ms. Duncan.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And your name is, again?

Ms. Marsha Duncan: Marsha Duncan.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Marsha; yes, okay. Thank you, Marsha. I happen to believe that early childhood educators are underpaid. I agree with Zeenat Janmohamed on the salary differential issue that she has raised. I'm not sure that we're ever going to solve that unless we really push governments to deal with that.

I wanted you to comment on the issue of the class size. At the moment, the average is 26; that's what they're talking about. I think it's going to be a real difficult issue, to teach those kids when you have such a high number of students in the classroom. Do you think 26 or 27 or 30 is a high number? Do you think the cap should be 26? Should it be lower? What do you think?

Ms. Marsha Duncan: I think the cap should really be lower, because we have children who will be entering the

system who also have special needs, and we have to look at their safety and keep their safety in mind also. So it should be a very low ratio.

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: What should that ratio be, in your experience?

Ms. Marsha Duncan: Like I just mentioned, the ratio should be at least 1 to 12.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: My understanding is that the ratio will be one adult to every 13 children. Maybe that's something we need to discuss further. But what I've been really impressed with is the way that the ECEs and the teaching profession have worked together on this, because the potential is here for everybody to stake out their own ground and the interests of the children get lost in all this.

Ms. Marsha Duncan: Yes.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: My understanding is that the full implementation of this program—there will be close to 4,000 new teachers in Ontario and what's particularly good news is 20,000 new early childhood educators. I think that's something that we should all be proud of, if we can work this out somehow.

What's your best advice as to how we can reach this? Obviously it's a phased approach. We're facing year one in September. What do we do? What's the most important thing to do?

Ms. Marsha Duncan: The most important thing to do is to get advice from early childhood educators how we can work together with teachers in the classroom, because we know when children just enter kindergarten, they are scared and we have the skill to help these children merge and feel more relaxed in a comfortable environment. So I think it will be a good idea to speak to other childhood educators and get their feel of how we can actually work in partnership and define our job also in Bill 242.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: No questions.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thanks to you, Ms. Duncan, for your deputation on behalf of CUPE Local 2484.

SCHOOLHOUSE PLAYCARE CENTRES OF DURHAM

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I now invite our next presenters to please come forward, Ms. Gilbert and Ms. Monaghan of the Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham. Welcome and please begin.

Ms. Denise Gilbert: Good afternoon. My name is Denise Gilbert, and I am here today with my colleague Karen Monaghan. I am the executive director of Schoolhouse Playcare Centres, and Karen Monaghan is a parent and a director on our board of directors.

We'd like to thank you for this opportunity to present our feedback on Bill 242, Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010.

Schoolhouse Playcare Centres is a non-profit child care organization, and we currently operate 22 child care centres, which are all located in schools within the Durham District School Board.

I am proud to say that we have been serving the Durham community and working in partnership with the school board for the past 25 years. We serve approximately 1,200 children from infancy through to 12 years of age, and we employ approximately 150 staff, 40% of whom have been with us for more than 10 years.

Over the past 25 years, we have demonstrated a commitment to children and families in meeting a wide range of child care needs, and this has allowed us to be true to our vision: We will be a building block to strong, diverse communities.

Ms. Karen Monaghan: Good afternoon. First, we want to preface our statements by saying that Schoolhouse Playcare Centres supports the government's vision of full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds and extended day as well. However, we have some serious concerns about the implementation of this plan and the implications it will have on our children and our families.

Our three main concerns are as follows:

(1) Bill 242 clearly identifies that not only will school boards be prohibited from entering into a partnership with local not-for-profit community providers in the delivery of before- and after-school programs for four- and five-year-olds, but it sets the stage for enabling school boards to deliver before- and after-school programs for any school-aged children.

(2) There will be a direct financial impact on child care centres by transferring full-day learning and extended daycare for four- and five-year-olds to the education sector, which will only be compounded by the termination of federal monies used to fund Best Start initiatives.

(3) Bill 242 is far-reaching in scope and goes beyond granting legislative authority for full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, and this will result in significant consequences.

Ms. Denise Gilbert: I'm now going to follow up with some further explanation of those concerns.

In terms of Bill 242 and the exclusion of community partners, Bill 242 categorically states that school boards must directly operate before- and after-school programs for four- and five-year-olds, therefore eliminating any existing partnerships that have already been established. The rationale for this is that it will reduce transition for children, and it will ensure consistency of programming and curriculum.

However, integrated services are not based on space and unilateral operations alone. They are based on relationships and communication and on people working together for a common goal. The goals of reducing transition and ensuring consistency can be achieved through positive and effective partnerships with community

providers, many of whom are already operating programs on school property. In fact, this is the fundamental structure in which Schoolhouse Playcare Centres operates. We are already located in the schools; there is an existing relationship and set of policies in place; and ongoing efforts have been made to support this integrated model.

For example, Schoolhouse Playcare Centres currently ensures that there is consent to disclosure in place for all of our children who are also attending the school. This ensures that we have the capacity to share information that will support individual children's needs.

Also, in conjunction with the child care liaison of the Durham District School Board, Schoolhouse Playcare Centres has also ensured that there is a system in place in which families of both new and existing schools are surveyed to determine child care needs if that is deemed something that needs to be done.

Bill 242 also goes further to say that school boards will be permitted to operate before- and after-school programs for all school-aged children. What is unclear about this is why it is even necessary when there are existing community services into which significant investment has already been made, who are currently providing that service and who are doing it well.

For example, Schoolhouse Playcare currently provides before- and after-school care to approximately 700 school-aged children in 19 schools. The impact of excluding community partners in the delivery of services to children and families is significant: It will ultimately eliminate choices for parents; it will likely cost more and, therefore, reduce the amount of subsidized space available in the system; it will place unnecessary expectations on boards of education to deliver services of which they have no knowledge or experience; and it will reduce quality, since these programs will not have to meet any regulatory requirements.

In terms of financial impact, the funding currently received by the child care sector is inconsistent, and as a direct result of reduced funding in previous years and lack of increased funding to match the expansion of child care, it is not adequate to meet the current operations of most child care centres. That is, most child care centres are already supplementing funding, and this revenue can only come from parent fees.

For example, Schoolhouse Playcare Centres has expanded over the past 25 years. However, wage subsidies have not increased consistently or relative to that growth. In order to maintain pay equity and not decrease our salaries to our staff, Schoolhouse Playcare has had to supplement the wage subsidies received through government grants. In 2009, the wage subsidies were supplemented by approximately \$264,000 or 33% of the total grants that we received. With no new federal funding expected, it is also anticipated that we will incur an additional shortfall of \$95,000, bringing the total shortfall to \$359,000.

If you combine the current funding challenges, the pending loss of federal funding and the implementation of Bill 242, the financial impact will be devastating.

Without significantly more stabilization dollars, child care centres will close, parent fees will sustain substantial increases, and there will be an overall loss of spaces.

In terms of the zero to 3.8 age group, this group is the most expensive to deliver to and is supported financially by other age groups. In our organization, we operate two centres that accommodate infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Because of the high cost to operate infant/toddler centres, in 2009 the combined deficit for these two programs was \$208,000. These losses were supported by our other programs which operate school-aged care.

In order to have these centres be self-sustaining—that is, not financially supported by other centres with other age groups—the parent fees would need to increase by approximately 17% to 48%, depending on the size and demographics of the centre. This would mean an increase in infant fees from \$970 per month to as much as \$1,435 per month.

Additionally, if all of the four- and five-year-olds were removed from our programs, this would represent a loss of revenue of \$800,000 or 15% of our total revenue collected from parent fees. This would mean an increase of 19% to 20% for our preschool fees, and that equates to an additional \$163 per month more than the fee that is already at \$809. If you do the math, that means that if a parent has a preschooler and an infant, you're looking at over \$2,000 a month.

1700

The six- to 12-year-olds represent another 50% of our total revenue, meaning that 65% of our organization is made up of school-age children, and it's that 65% which keeps us viable and which allows us to support infants, toddlers and preschoolers. The remaining 35% of children from zero to 3.8 could not be financially self-sustaining without that school-age component.

Without stabilization funding, the parent fees required to make this group self-sustainable would have to suffer significant increases, which would result in parents' inability to access quality care and fewer subsidized spaces as a result of the higher costs per space.

To presume that all child care centres could convert space to accommodate children from zero to 3.8 years would be unrealistic based on demographics in many areas—for example, in Durham we are suffering a declining birth rate in many areas—which would therefore result in closures of some child care centres and potential losses of child care spaces. For us, at Schoolhouse Playcare, we increased our school-age enrolment by 4% in 2009 and we've decreased the preschool enrolment by 9%, so it's not going to be an option for us to convert to infant-toddler in many of our locations.

With respect to the scope of Bill 242, it goes much further than granting legislative authority for full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. It grants a great deal of power to the ministry to issue guidelines and policies on the operations of extended-day programs for all school-age children, not just four- and five-year-olds, which therefore exempts them from having to meet the same requirement as licensed child care programs, and

that would be our Day Nurseries Act. This creates an inequitable system in which there are two separate standards—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): With respect, Ms. Gilbert and Ms. Monaghan, I'll need to intervene there. Thank you, on behalf of the committee, for your deputation and written submission on behalf of School-house Playcare Centres of Durham.

ASSOCIATION OF DAY CARE OPERATORS OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I would now invite our next presenters to please come forward, from the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario: Ms. Yeaman and Mr. Humphreys. Welcome, and I invite you to please begin now.

Ms. Kim Yeaman: Good afternoon. My name is Kim Yeaman and I'm the co-president of the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario, or ADCO. I'm also a direct operator of a child care centre in Simcoe county. With me today is our past president, Greg Humphreys, who, like myself, is the operator of two small child care centres in Peel region.

I'd like to start by telling you a bit about ADCO. ADCO is the largest single organization representing small child care operators in the province. Our mission is to bring the owners and managers of Ontario's independent, licensed child care programs together to enhance child care quality and achieve common goals. Our membership includes licensed centre-based programs, home child care agencies, nursery schools, preschools and before- and after-school programs. ADCO member centres include both privately owned community-based centres and not-for-profit community agencies, with roughly 60% being the former and 40% the latter. Over 70% of our members are single-site operators, and in most cases the owner is an ECE who actually works in the centre every day.

First and foremost, ADCO members are educators, so they strongly support the concept of an early learning program and are committed to doing whatever is best for families and children. They are very much in favour of the objective of the McGuinty government's early learning program. Our concerns, however, rest in the unintended impacts of implementation in the child care sector.

Indeed, as it stands now, the phase-in of the early learning program and the corresponding exodus of the four- and five-year-olds from our centres, coupled with the potential cessation of federal child care dollars, have created a situation which will force our members to, at minimum, increase their fees or, in a worst-case scenario, close their doors. We are confident that no member of this House and certainly no member of this committee wishes to see regulated child care become unaffordable or unavailable. That is why we are here today. We would like to discuss some initiatives that we feel would go a long way towards stabilizing child care as we transition

to full-day school-based programming for four- and five-year-olds.

The most obvious and pressing need with this transition is fiscal support to realign our centres with a younger demographic. Many centres, particularly now, have great difficulty in accessing banking capital. With the uncertainty in child care, even those who can access banking loans will find the interest rates exceptionally high due to the risk. This is why we need Ontario to provide dollars to allow centres to be redesigned and retrofitted to accommodate younger children. This will create infrastructure jobs and help keep centres open.

The second issue facing licensed child care centres revolves around staffing and operations. It is predictable that with the phase-in of the early learning program, it will be much harder to secure and retain quality ECEs. The reason for this is simple: We as small operators cannot match the wage and benefit package school boards are offering. As an ECE myself, I understand and respect the work our profession does. I would love to be able to pay my staff what is being proposed by the Ministry of Education, but there is no way I can do this without significantly raising fees for parents. I hope the government will come to the table in the form of wage subsidies to allow for a degree of equity between providers and the school system.

The third issue that we see as necessary is the most challenging. With the removal of four- and five-year-olds from our centres, we need to realign the Day Nurseries Act to reflect the new age ranges we serve. This must be done with dual focus. Quality must be maintained, but we also must ensure that centres are able to provide affordable and accessible services for families.

The reason these stabilization measures are necessary is that under our current system, four- and five-year-olds cross-subsidize the cost of care for younger children. In essence, the larger ratios allowed for this age bracket ensures that care for our youngest kids is more affordable. Without this cross-subsidization, licensed child care programs will be forced to charge for the real cost of care for the youngest children, which will bring fee increases for parents of up to 25%. This will result in more parents choosing unregulated, street corner care as regulated child care becomes either unaffordable or unavailable for children under 3.8 years of age.

We believe these measures, particularly the fiscal recommendations we have presented, must be applied evenly, regardless of auspice, as the challenge, as we've seen today, affects all operators equally. Further, any plan that would support not-for-profit operators only would wind up excluding the vast majority of operators in rural and already underserved areas. In these areas, small private sector centres usually are the only licensed facilities available.

We are hopeful that, should members of this committee and this House support some of the initiatives we have proposed today, we can ensure that child care remains affordable and accessible to parents in all Ontario communities.

In closing, I'd like to thank all members of the committee and the House for the opportunity of meeting with you today.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Yeaman. About a minute and half per side, beginning with Ms. Jones.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm familiar with my area, but as a general rule with ADCO, how many of your providers would have operations either adjacent to or within a school?

Ms. Kim Yeaman: It really depends on each member. Some members have a lot of sites; some have one site. Most of our members have a single site, and a lot of those members would be—the private members are the ones that are single sites off-site from schools.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Clearly, in the early part of the introduction of this bill, the government was happy to say that removing the four- and five-year-olds would free up spaces in the early child care centres. They were quite proud of that. They just didn't realize the unintended consequences. Clearly, you and the previous presenter show statistically how this affects you and affects all of you.

They don't realize that most of them can't run with the programs from ages zero to three because they're expensive, and you're going to have to increase fees. If that is true, a whole lot of people who can't afford it now are not going to be able to afford it when the increase comes.

It's a good reminder. Thank you for coming. It's a continual reminder to the government, because they need to deal with this.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think today we've heard from 18 people so far. For some reason—fate I guess—the first person was the only person who said, "Full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds isn't a good idea to move ahead with." It seems that there's a majority view of people saying that for the four- and five-year-old kids in this province, this is the best thing we can possibly do.

Ms. Kim Yeaman: Any early learning program for the majority of our children in this province is good for children.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: So we're left with the reality of deciding what's more important: the kids or the process. Certainly, you can't ignore the process, but you want to put the emphasis on the kids.

But what suggestions—obviously, you've offered some, but what's the most important thing we could do to maintain what we want to do for the four- and five-year-olds and maintain the viability of the child care system?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Stabilization funds.

Ms. Kim Yeaman: Stabilization funds.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: So it comes down to money?

Ms. Kim Yeaman: I think it does.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Flynn, and thanks to you, Ms. Yeaman and Mr. Humphreys,

for your deputation on behalf of the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario.

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MR. PETR VARMUZA

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I would now invite Mr. Varmuza, who I believe comes to us in his capacity as a private citizen. I would invite you, Mr. Varmuza, to please begin.

Mr. Petr Varmuza: Thank you very much. Until my recent retirement, I should tell you that I was the director of operational effectiveness for Toronto Children's Services, in which capacity I was responsible for planning, policy and managing a budget of about \$370 million, all of that dealing with child care and children.

However, I'm not here on behalf of the city of Toronto; I gather you're getting a written deputation from the city of Toronto. Why I'm really here is because I spent most of my working life, both as a parent and as an employee, working with children and trying to make sure that we have a better system for children in this province. I have seen many attempts at reforms come and go, and by far, this one has the most potential for actually happening. I am here to make sure that you don't let go and that you proceed forward.

In evaluating any of these proposals and looking at Bill 242, I'd like to sort of give you three "ares." My "ares" are: Are you doing the right thing; are you doing it right; and are you doing it with the right resources?

It's really hard to say whether you're doing the right thing, because in fact there is no government statement of the vision for the early learning system. Since Dr. Pascal presented his recommendations last June, outside of one letter that the Premier wrote—about 130 signatories to a letter back in September or October—there has been no statement saying, "Yes, we accept your vision. Your vision is our vision," or "We don't accept this vision." In fact, what you've got here is a bill that deals essentially with full-day kindergarten and then suddenly it becomes an early learning program of this government. I'm not sure that this is the right thing. On the other hand, it is a reasonable first step if you're moving ahead.

Of special importance is the integrated learning environment—the fact that you're bringing in ECEs and teachers together for the better learning and education of children. I would remind you that right now, in fact, only about 25% of kindergarten teachers have any kind of background or training in child development. The bringing of ECEs into the classroom can only be a good thing.

In response to the questions on the ratios, the fact is that now you're going to have ratios of 1 to 13 instead of 1 to 20, and at least one of those people will know what they're doing when it comes to child development. In the darkest moments, though, I tend to think that bringing the ECEs into the classroom was done purely for cost-saving reasons.

Now, moving to the "Are you doing it right?" I think this is where the biggest problem lies. There is huge confusion in the child care community and the education

community: Where is this whole thing going? Parents are afraid of actually committing to the early learning programs because they might need their child care for the summer, PD days and March break and it might not be there. There are visions of a large-scale collapse of the child care system—you've heard all those presentations before—and part of it is because there is a lack of certainty, there is no vision and there is no plan. There is a tremendously slow pace of communication and change. The minister didn't meet with the principals until mid-January. What have they been doing for the last two years? What have they been doing since Dr. Pascal published his report? There's movement, but the communication and the pace of change is really too slow to make it work.

Six years of implementation is way too long. I mean, something that should be transition and transformation, painful as it may be, but which is ultimately better for children, parents, communities and staff—maybe not the operators—is better for everybody. Six years is really six years of pain and suffering as opposed to a quick change that'll make a difference. As somebody said, you're trying to build on a patchwork. Why are you trying to build on a patchwork of services that are done, really, on the backs of underpaid ECEs when it can be done better?

Also, there is a huge problem in the bill—and I do have a few good things to say about it, but there is a devil in the details, and we've seen it time and time again. When the previous government, under the Conservatives, tried to, I would say “kill,” but I'm not going to say that word, child care, it was done through regulation; it was done through guidelines, through policy. You have to watch this. It's not just what's in the act; you have to watch the details.

Are you doing it with the right resources? Well, you have a really inflexible funding regime. I know child care funding to the city of Toronto comes in 19 different parts, and there is no way that you can combine it. Every time you want to do something progressive, you have to beg the ministry and the answer is “No.” You have a system that's falling apart. Frankly, we have all been blaming the federal government, but the fact is that since 2006, when the social transfer tax, social transfers came to Ontario—there was a 3% annual increase in those transfers, and not a penny of it found its way into the child care system. When you hear about the city of Toronto having to cut 5,000 spaces by the end of next year, that is a \$50-million shortfall. Only \$16.4 million is, in fact, a direct result of the cuts to Best Start. The province needs to take some blame for not properly funding the base operations of the centres.

Frankly, part of the problem with the resources is that we see a real lack of commitment, a lack of expertise, a lack of sense of urgency and a lack of vision on behalf of the provincial bureaucrats. We have done the math in this area and we found that in fact, it can be done; the whole Pascal report can be done. It can be done right and it can, in fact, be done within existing funding if you do the whole thing and you do it quickly enough.

I would give you these following recommendations. I think you must demand from your leaders a clear vision of early learning. You either accept Pascal or you don't. But you need to have real legislation that transforms and changes—not just implements full day, and that legislation needs to talk about integrating early learning and care for children from zero to 12 at least.

You have to define what are equitable outcomes for children. You have to give the mandate to communities for planning and delivery of services. You must stop confusing the role of schools in the community—which is really important—with the role of the school boards. School boards are just a bureaucracy. School boards are not the ones that should be planning for community services. We've got four of them in the city of Toronto, and if you really look at it outside of what happened with the Constitution, no sensible person would design an educational system as it is now. You must provide a clear road map, you must define outcomes and you must cut the implementation period.

Quality is of most importance. You must insist that all kindergarten educators must have qualifications that include courses on child development. Maybe it's going to take five years for that period, but do that. You should change subsection 260(1) to require that all staff in extended day programs are ECEs or teachers. The act already has the ability to exempt temporarily for one year, when there is not enough of a supply of qualified staff. There is no reason not to have every single staff ECE-qualified.

You must require an integrated, common curriculum for extended day programs and integrate it fully with the full-day component of the program. You must also require that the extended day programs be offered on a year-round basis, and you should change subsection 259(2) accordingly. The cost of not doing it is too great for children, it's too great for parents, it's too great for staff, communities and, ultimately, the child care system.

Finally, I would say, you must be bold. This should be a transformative change of early learning and child care. This should be a transition period, a transformation, but not this long-term pain that we're facing over six years.

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: It would be longer. Sorry.

Mr. Petr Varmuza: Thank you. Finally, I would say—

Interjection.

Mr. Petr Varmuza: No, I—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Mr. Varmuza, I'll need to intervene there. I don't know if I'll add or subtract Mr. Marchese's addition to your speech. But in any case, thank you very much for your presentation and your presence today and your very learned remarks. I'm sure the committee will consider them.

WEST END PARENTS' DAYCARE

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I will now invite our next presenter to please come forward: Ms. Lavoie of

the West End Parents' Daycare centre, and entourage. Welcome, and please begin.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you. I guess I'm the entourage. Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this very important bill.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Entourage, we need to know names.

Ms. Marit Stiles: My name is Marit Stiles. I am a working parent of two daughters in senior kindergarten and grade 3, and I currently sit on the board of the West End Parents' Daycare, which is my children's daycare.

West End is a parent-run, non-profit daycare operating in downtown Toronto since 1975. Currently, our centre offers child care for up to 110 children aged 18 months to 10 years. Our excellent staff, who are almost entirely early childhood educators, are represented by CUPE 2484.

First, I want to tell you that in many ways, I am truly sorry that by the time full-day early learning comes into effect, my children would be too old to benefit from it. I think all of us who care about children and education are excited by the prospect of full-day learning.

But today, my fellow board member Brigitte Lavoie and I are here to warn you that this important program, as currently envisioned, is doomed to fail without a significant investment in child care and stabilization funds.

Full-day early learning cannot succeed without quality, affordable child care. The way daycares are currently financed—or, rather, not adequately financed—means that full-day learning risks shrinking child care services, reducing spaces and thereby undermining families, especially low-income families.

If you team full-day learning with the already dramatically underfunded child care system in Ontario, you have an emerging crisis. If the provincial budget doesn't restore the \$63.5 million to child care, we will see spaces lost and a projected 3,480 parents leaving the workforce because they cannot afford child care. All those economic benefits that should have come from full-day learning will be lost.

When I think ahead to the next few years, here is what keeps me up at night: A single parent, with a toddler and a four-year-old child, who depends on a subsidized space in our daycare. Imagine that her four-year-old is now attending school from 9 to 3:30. Now imagine that the daycare she depends on shuts down, and there are no other subsidized spaces available that service that school. She must now choose between her low-income job, a job that likely barely allows her to cover rent and food, and making sure that she is there at 3:30 to pick up her child. Well, that's no choice at all.

That is the crisis we are seeking to avert in our community. I am turning this over to our treasurer, Brigitte Lavoie—and I should mention we're both volunteers, of course, on our parent-run daycare board—to explain to you in very specific terms how this scenario emerges.

Dr. Brigitte Lavoie: Thanks, Marit. I'm Dr. Brigitte Lavoie. I'm a professor and a cancer researcher at U of T,

but I'm speaking to you right now as a parent and as treasurer for West End Parents' Daycare.

As a not-for-profit daycare, my board and I are very concerned about the impact full-day learning will have on the financial viability of our centre.

Currently, the kindergarten stream accounts for 34% of our fee revenue, and its loss, in the absence of additional funding, will mean a revenue shortfall for us of over \$278,000.

On the face of it, the contention that providing full-day learning in schools for kindergarten-aged children should result in the creation of new spaces seems very straightforward. Unfortunately, as former presenters have already mentioned, the reality of the situation is that because of the higher staff-to-child ratios mandated by the Day Nurseries Act, baby, toddler, and preschool rooms are much more expensive to operate, and they either run at a loss or just barely break even. For example, our toddler program runs at a yearly loss of about \$30,000, while our preschool program almost gets by with a \$5,300 deficit. As such, we rely on the revenue from the more profitable kindergarten and school-aged streams to subsidize our programs for under-four-year-olds.

Given the space and staff-to-child ratio limitations, we cannot make up for the loss of revenue from losing our kindergarten stream by simply offering spaces for younger children without a huge increase in fees to make these streams profitable. For instance, fees for toddlers and preschoolers would have to increase by over 20% at our centre so that we would remain financially viable. That would translate to a fee increase of about \$200 a month—\$193 for a preschooler or \$230 for a toddler—when for most families, child care already accounts for the second-largest expense next to the mortgage.

The bottom line is, as a parent, I'm really excited about the prospect of full-day learning. I think it's a very courageous move. It requires great vision. However, its implementation is definitely challenging.

As a board member of West End Parents' Daycare, I foresee that without additional stable funding to subsidize our more expensive daycare programs, the real impact of full-day learning is that centres like ours will be unable to offset the financial loss of our kindergarten streams. This is a threat not only to our current programs for the under-four-year-olds but also to our very financial viability, which ultimately would lead to a net decrease in daycare spots.

What we need to save the situation is twofold: additional stable funding to offset the loss of kindergarten revenue, and a clear implementation strategy for full-day learning so that we can start to plan our future as well. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you very much. About a minute per side, beginning with Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you—a great presentation. I think you're the first set of parents we've heard from today. You're the people who will feel it the second-most after the children.

A previous speaker said, “Don’t build this on a patchwork of services.” I think you’ve outlined that the operation of your child care centre is actually based on subsidies: The older kids really subsidize the child care. You’ve also said that for four- and five-year-olds, this is a tremendous move forward, so we don’t want to stop that. We don’t want your centre to fold or to lose money, so it seems to me we need to address how your child care centre and all others across Ontario actually operate. Is that a fair assumption?

Dr. Brigitte Lavoie: Certainly it is clear that the toddler and the preschool fees do not reflect the actual cost of child care.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Is that the real issue?

Dr. Brigitte Lavoie: Yes, and the fact that people couldn’t afford it—

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Your presentation has reinforced what we’ve been hearing for most of the afternoon, so I don’t have any specific questions.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Jones. Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to thank the two of you for coming. You’re not workers in the field, you’re not an association, but parents who clearly understand that as much as this is a good thing, unless we deal with the unintended consequences, many child care centres are going to be threatened. I just wanted to thank you for taking the time to come and remind us of that.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Stiles and Dr. Lavoie, for your deputation on behalf of West End Parents’ Daycare.

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE SCHOOL OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I’d now invite our next presenter to please come forward, Ms. Rubin of the George Brown College School of Early Childhood, sans entourage. Welcome, and please begin.

Ms. Patricia Chorney Rubin: Good afternoon. I’m Patricia Chorney Rubin, the director of early childhood at George Brown College.

George Brown College is one of 24-some-odd community colleges that provide training to the future employees of full-day early learning and other aspects of the sector. At George Brown College we are indeed ready to stand behind the government in terms of its development of full-day early learning programs and are ready to offer our support and expertise as it continues to develop.

We have a large program, some few hundred students ready to graduate soon, and we also operate nine lab school child care centres, so about 400 children and their families. We, like many here, certainly do support the vision and the go-forward of full-day early learning. Like many, we recognize that change is difficult and it’s hard to have a platform of change and not change things.

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At George Brown College, we are very proud of the programs we operate, in terms of four- and five-year-olds, and some after-school programs. We think we provide some of the finest programs, certainly, if I may be so bold as to say, in the country. But we recognize that as we move forward we may have to change the way in which we do what we do as full-day early learning moves forward.

We recognize that our programs are excellent and children and families have access to them, but we recognize the importance of fully funded programs and that all children in the province have access to these kinds of programs.

I agree with what many folks have said already. We’ve already lifted the notion of early childhood educators working in teams with kindergarten teachers, bringing two sectors together in terms of their professional training, to offer high-quality programs.

I’m going to stick a pin in some of the comments that have already been made: the notion of early childhood educators who are paid according to the true value of the work and pay equity; the notion of looking at the ratio and having a cap on it, that 1-to-13 ratio, and recognizing that the class of 1-to-13 is a ratio that we need to pay attention to and be careful that we don’t go down that slippery slope of 30 or 32 or 33.

Again, like many, I will also identify that the stabilization of the existing child care programs, such as our own at George Brown College, is essential. Moving forward with the implementation of Best Start child and family centres in tandem with the establishment of full-day early learning programs is indeed the best strategy to go forward with. Like others, we are recognizing that just going forward with full-day early learning for fours and fives and not having a clear vision for the child and family centres, not ensuring that there are resources allocated to the under-fours, will indeed result in huge problems for children and families in the province. The vision was not about promising practices for fours and fives at the expense of the experience for children under four.

George Brown College, like other colleges and universities, is poised to support the implementation of full-day early learning for children and is ready, willing and able to work with government and community partners to establish the framework for the child and family centres. We’re also keen to ensure that research informs the progress, programs, policy and practice as we go forward.

There has been discussion about whether or not there will be enough early childhood educators to ensure that there truly is an early childhood educator working in partnership with kindergarten teachers. Colleges across the province graduate about 2,500 graduates a year. Colleges are coming together with universities to look at planning to ensure that we will indeed be graduating enough early childhood educators as we move this out over the next five years.

Clearly, there are important issues that have been raised today. They are important bumps along the road

and we need to pay attention to them. I think we are better than the sum total of all the problems as we go forward with transformational change, but they are important to pay attention to.

I'd be very happy to defer my time to Petr Varmuza, should you have any further questions, because clearly he is one of the experts in the room. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Professor Rubin. Beginning with the PC side, about 90 seconds or so.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: No, I don't have any additional questions, thank you.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I enjoyed Petr's remarks as well. Maybe you should give me his telephone number so I can talk to him.

Just a quick question on the ratio: You heard Mr. Flynn say the ratio is 13 to 1. I just need to remind everyone, the ratio is not 13 to 1. It could be 13 to 1, but it could be higher. He doesn't say this. That's why some of us are saying that we should say there's going to be a cap. I'm assuming you agree on the cap.

Ms. Patricia Chorney Rubin: We're in agreement to pay attention to those numbers around good practice, absolutely.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for the presentation. Thank you for your support of the concept and its implementation. You deal with this; obviously, you see the young people who are going to go into this field and the future that they face. Often in the past, I think people went into the field out of the goodness of their hearts, because when they looked at the salary grid, they knew they weren't going to be making a lot of money. It was more something they really loved to do than it was something that you could buy a big, beautiful house on.

That's got to be exciting for the profession, but from an academic point of view, when you look at our country and the fact that it still doesn't have a national child care strategy, Ontario's trying to do the best it can. The opposition parties have been quite cooperative on this—to date, anyway—and I think they want to see the same thing. What would a national child care strategy add to this debate, for example?

Ms. Patricia Chorney Rubin: It certainly would add in terms of some cost-sharing and some of the issues that we have been identifying. I think that many in the room have already agreed on what should be done; I think most people believe the "what"—the notion of publicly funded early years programs, and many are getting close to how it should be done. We're having problems with the "who"—who should be doing what. A lot of that comes with a strategy that hasn't been clearly resourced as yet. As Petr said, do it right for the right reasons, with the right resources.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: With the feds as a partner, this would be easier?

Ms. Patricia Chorney Rubin: I think we need to come together without finger-pointing, but absolutely, a

national policy. It didn't stop Quebec, but I do think a national policy—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you very much, Mr. Flynn, and thanks to you, Professor Rubin, for your deputation on behalf of the George Brown College School of Early Childhood.

TODAY'S FAMILY—EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I would now welcome back Ms. Flaherty of Today's Family—Early Learning and Child Care. Welcome. We'll distribute those. I would invite you to—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you. Please begin.

Ms. Marni Flaherty: Thank you for inviting me and my colleagues here today to present to you the concerns surrounding the language and implementation of Bill 242, as it currently stands. As you know, my name is Marni Flaherty and I'm the CEO of Today's Family, an early learning and child care organization in Hamilton and the surrounding areas. We're also a member of the Quality Early Learning Network.

We have been providing quality licensed child care for families for more than 27 years, and today our programs meet the needs of more than 4,000 children every day. We believe in parental choice, and our services for families include early learning and child care programs; licensed home-based early learning and child care; Ontario early years centres; before- and after-school care programs; and summer camps.

I am also a parent of three children and a resident of Ontario, and I am here today to tell you that I am very concerned about the potential impact of Bill 242.

Before I speak directly to my concerns about the bill, I'd like to explain to the committee the valuable role of partnerships in a community like Hamilton to provide an integrated care and education system for children ages zero to 12 in our province.

Six years ago, the Ontario Liberal government set out a bold plan for children. The Minister of Children and Youth at that time, the Honourable Marie Bountrogianni, announced a 10-year plan for Ontario's children. We were really excited about that plan. This plan was called the Ontario Best Start plan. This was a philosophy for change, a commitment to families and children to work differently in the province to ensure that we had an integrated early years system. Schools, early years programs, public health services, recreation and libraries came together in a meaningful, collaborative way to best serve our children.

Hamilton was chosen as one of three demonstration sites in Ontario. I have had the honour of a co-chair position of a parent engagement committee for Hamilton's Best Start network. The work that these demonstrations sites have done over the years is tremendous. We worked with the city and with high-quality partners

including the Hamilton YMCA and school boards in elementary and secondary school locations. Our partnerships with school boards have supported the Best Start vision and child care for children and families, providing great benefits for families and children.

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The Best Start collaboration provided a seamless day for children and parents, an opportunity to partner with teachers to support children's learning and promote readiness for grade 1, improved access for service to parents with children aged 18 months to 12 years, and excellent collaboration with neighbourhood Early Years partners to increase access to information for parents and caregivers. There's even an economic benefit: supporting employment and mitigating poverty.

All of this is consistent with the recommendations and vision in Charles Pascal's report, *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, and with the Premier's message to all of us when he said, "Ontario will call on its community partners to plan and develop before- and after-school programs for six- to 12-year-olds where there is sufficient parent demand."

In Hamilton and across the province, people are doing just that. Children and families are at the centre of the flexible community model already offered in collaboration with schools. There are already partners in the schools working together to provide a seamless day rich with arts, recreation, homework supports and other out-of-school opportunities for our children. We believe it takes a community to raise a child.

I am here today to tell you that Bill 242, as written, seriously threatens to undo all the good work that has been done in communities such as Hamilton. Perhaps even more seriously, it threatens to destabilize the well-developed and much-needed services of not-for-profit child care and early learning in Ontario.

As you know, Bill 242 authorizes and mandates all school boards to operate full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds in junior and senior kindergarten in elementary schools. But it also states that every school board "shall operate extended day programs for four- and five-year-olds before and after school."

This sentence has enormous repercussions for the network of community-based agencies and partners that today provide care and early learning for tens of thousands of children in Ontario. The act, if passed, would require school boards to establish and operate separate extended day programs despite the fact that collaborative and co-located services in the schools already exist.

The bill, as written, effectively excludes partnerships with quality, community child care providers who have the experience and expertise to deliver those programs. It would disrupt and duplicate existing service options for families which occur 12 months of the year. This bill threatens to undo the great strides made in collaborative work across Ontario around the Best Start initiatives.

As well, and perhaps even more seriously, the bill would destabilize and potentially threaten the sustainability of child care programs for infants and children

aged zero to 3.8. As this committee knows, the child care model in Ontario relies on a funding and wage subsidy program and a mix of age cohorts that manage cost efficiencies. The model has evolved to compensate for widespread underfunding.

Infants and toddlers require the most amount of care and demand the most resources, making them the most expensive cohort. It is only the mix of care that includes older children that makes this model affordable while still providing high-quality, licensed and regulated care. This bill, as currently drafted, threatens the provision of quality child care and early learning in Ontario.

I have come here today to ask you, the government, to take steps to ensure that quality child care continues in Ontario. We would ask that you amend Bill 242 to allow school boards to partner with community organizations, to immediately announce stabilization funding to support quality child care for children aged zero to 3.8, and to establish a funding mechanism for the child care sector that would build on existing partnerships, support and develop the quality programs in existence and encourage community-based initiatives in collaboration with school boards across the province.

Much depends on your decision. We in the not-for-profit child care world are committed to working with school and community partners to provide the best care and early learning for children. We want to make cities like Hamilton and the entire province the best place to raise a child.

Ontario needs a strong, healthy and sustainable child care sector to provide high-quality care that will prepare children for the full day of learning. We are in full support of the proposed amendment that has been presented by the Quality Early Learning Network, YMCA Ontario and Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada. Please help us make this happen. Thank you for your consideration and time.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Flaherty. We have about 20 seconds per side. Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you. You were saying very much what others have been saying, and Mr. Varmuza's three rights apply: Is it the right thing—and we all agree; are we doing it right—and we've got concerns; and are we getting the right resources—and we're not. Unless we fix that, it's going to be a problem.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Mr. McMeekin has a great question.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: No question, just a comment: It was a marvellous presentation, but I would expect nothing less, knowing what I know about the history. Thank you for everything you do. I think there's a lot we can learn about real collaborative leadership and partnership from the model in Hamilton and I really appreciate—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you. Ms. Jones.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm curious, and maybe this is an unfair question to you, but have you ever had any justi-

fication for why the bill is written the way it is in terms of not allowing those partnerships?

Ms. Marni Flaherty: I think the bill's written so that these services have to be in all the schools, and I think that's the right thing. But I'm not sure why there's—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Jones, and thanks to you, Ms. Flaherty, for your deputiation on behalf of Today's Family—Early Learning and Child Care.

COLLEGE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I would now invite our next presenters to please come forward: Ms. Mahon, Ms. Tarshis, and Ms. Juozapavicius, which is likely Armenian.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Lithuanian.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Lithuanian, there you go.

Welcome, and please begin.

Ms. Lois Mahon: Good afternoon. My name is Lois Mahon, and I'm the president of the College of Early Childhood Educators. Beside me is Debbie Tarshis, our legal counsel, and Dainora Juozapavicius, our registrar and CEO. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation to the standing committee on Bill 242.

The College of Early Childhood Educators supports the legislative changes to the Education Act, Early Childhood Educators Act, and other statutes proposed by Bill 242. We believe that the proposed amendments establish the framework necessary for the implementation of full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. We believe that Bill 242 recognizes the new and unique role that early childhood educators are intended to play in the full-day learning classroom, both during the regular school day and when they lead the before- and after-school programs. We make recommendations which we believe will strengthen the bill in accomplishing its objectives and some technical amendments to support the college in meeting certain requirements under the Education Act.

The College of Early Childhood Educators is a regulatory body for ECE in Ontario. Our mandate is to serve and protect the public interest through self-regulation of the profession of early childhood education. Since 2008, we have registered more than 26,000 early childhood educators. The objects of our college: to regulate the practice of ECE and govern our members; to develop, establish and maintain qualifications for membership; to issue certificates of registration; to establish and enforce professional and ethical standards; to receive and investigate complaints against members of the college; to deal with issues of discipline, professional misconduct, incompetence, and incapacity; and to promote high standards and quality assurance with respect to early childhood educators.

In our support of Bill 242, we also recognize that there is a need for regulations, policies and guidelines to be made to further implement and define full-day early learning for four- and five-year-olds. We believe these will be critical to ensure that the full-day early learning program provides high-quality and effective play-based education for children, and also to ensure that early childhood educators—professionals who are qualified to deliver high-quality education and care for children, and who are registered and regulated by the college in the public interest—are employed by school boards as intended in Bill 242, and that these ECEs are permitted to practice in the full-day learning program to the full extent of the scope of practice of early childhood education as set out in the ECE Act.

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We look forward to working with the government during these next critical stages.

You will find all of our recommendations and details in our submission. I'd like to highlight for you our first three recommendations:

(1) That in light of the critical role that the regulations, policies and guidelines will play in the implementation of the full-day early learning program, the government continue to consult with stakeholders, including the college, as the regulations, policies and guidelines are being developed.

(2) That the government proceed with the proposed amendments to the Education Act related to the definition of “designated early childhood educator” and “early childhood educator”; the requirements for school boards to designate at least one position in junior kindergarten, kindergarten and the extended day program class as requiring an early childhood educator; the requirements for school boards to appoint an early childhood educator to each designated position; the requirement that an early childhood educator must be in addition to the teacher assigned; and the requirement for membership in the College of Early Childhood Educators; and that through broadly based communications with school boards, registered early childhood educators and other stakeholders, the government communicate about these important provisions and the requirements they impose on school boards to hire registered early childhood educators and clarify any confusion regarding the term “designated early childhood educator” and other matters.

(3) That when the government makes regulations with respect to the criteria governing the granting of a letter of permission, careful consideration be given to the conditions prescribed for such purpose, and that different and additional conditions from the ones that are set out in the current regulation be considered.

The college proposes, in addition to the types of conditions as set out in regulation 142/08, with respect to advertising positions for early childhood educators, there be an increased number of times of required advertising, increased time periods and an increased variety of methods of required publication compared to the advertising provisions as set out in the regulation; and that

the following restrictions be set out in order for an individual to be eligible to be granted a letter of permission:

If an individual was previously granted a letter of permission, the individual must demonstrate within a two-year period that he or she is taking or has taken measures to obtain a diploma in early childhood education from an Ontario college of applied arts and to become a member of the college; and, no letter of permission may be granted to the same individual more than three times.

With respect to the number of letters of permission, there should be restrictions on the aggregate number of letters of permission to be granted by a board with respect to any particular school year, an obligation for boards to report annually on the aggregate number and an obligation for boards to make these reports publicly available.

The college also suggests that, especially in the first number of years of implementation of the early learning program, the minister maintain direct oversight and control regarding the granting of letters of permission and not delegate this authority. The college would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the government with respect to the development of a regulation regarding these letters of permission.

The college is committed to the regulation of the profession of early childhood education in the public interest. We believe that Bill 242 will establish the framework necessary for the implementation of full-day early learning for four- and five-year-olds. We are pleased that it recognizes the new and unique role that early childhood educators are intended to play in the full-day learning program. We believe our recommendations will strengthen the bill in accomplishing its objectives.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to make this submission to the standing committee and for the committee's consideration of the college's submission.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Mahon. A minute per side, beginning with Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I just want to thank you for the presentation, certainly. Obviously you support what's before us today. This can be done by next September, though, right? This is possible?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Just say yes. That's what he wants to hear.

Ms. Lois Mahon: We are working diligently with our members and with the ministries to look at making that happen.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Okay. But there are people here who are saying that this is quite complex and we can't get to that. I'd agree with you that we can. I just needed to hear you say that.

Interjections.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Rosie won't say it, but he knows it.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Leading the witness.

I just wanted to thank you for your presentation. I'm not sure how long you've been here this afternoon, but the consistent praise for ECEs and what they do in that early learning has been reinforced a lot. So we appreciate your work.

Ms. Lois Mahon: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Jones. Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: OSSTF raised a good question. They said you're likely to have different unions representing the early childhood educators and the other boards all over Ontario, so there's likely to be conflict between the two and students might be affected. Have you anticipated that eventuality and how would you deal with that, or what would you propose to deal with the potential conflict that might arise, if any?

Ms. Lois Mahon: In the regulation of our profession in dealing with professional and ethical standards, we would expect our members to maintain the standards of practice, the ethical and professional standards that we set, and if they are unable to do that, we'd deal with that through the college processes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Mr. Marchese, and thanks to you, Ms. Mahon, Ms. Tarshis and Ms. Juozapavicius, of the College of Early Childhood Educators.

SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I would now invite our next presenters to please come forward, Ms. Jahangir and Ms. Islam of the South Asian Women's Rights Organization. Welcome, and I'd invite you to please begin now.

Ms. Sultana Jahangir: Thanks for the invitation. I'm sorry to say that my colleague Ms. Islam got sick, so she couldn't make it, so I came here to talk.

My name is Sultana Jahangir. I'm the executive director of the South Asian Women's Rights Organization. I have been asked by a group of low-income immigrant women from east Toronto to represent their views regarding the early learning initiative of the Ontario government and their views on the legislation being considered.

The immigrant women of our community only have access to low-wage jobs, despite high levels of education they brought with them as skilled worker class immigrants. These jobs do not provide enough income to pay for child care, even unlicensed child care, what we call "dumping the kids in someone's basement." Without government child care support, we cannot work. Our families are locked in poverty.

When Premier McGuinty announced in June that the Pascal report would be implementing starting in September 2010, the women were very excited and began making their plans to get to work or to work on bridging their international credentials. We were especially happy

about the Premier's promise to make low-income neighbourhoods the focus of the first phase of the project. We were sure that our community would be involved in the rollout since it is one of the poorest in the city.

But as the English expression says, "The devil is in the details." It turned out that the promise had escape clauses. Provincial criteria were established through a process lacking transparency that served to exclude the most needy neighbourhoods in Toronto from the phase 1 rollout. A construction and renovation ban meant that the overcrowded schools in immigrant communities would not be involved in phase 1 and that they could be excluded for years to come. Schools are not built or renovated overnight. We have the bizarre situation with the first phase of full-day kindergarten and extended day-care for four- and five-year-olds—kindergartens where there are no children and no children where there are kindergartens.

In my native Bangladesh, we also have an expression, "The dawn predicts the day." So you will have to excuse me and my community if we have been soured on the Ontario early learning initiative. There is a child care and early learning system in place in Ontario today that excludes and marginalizes low-income women, and the dawn of the early learning project is predicting more exclusion and marginalization for us.

With respect to the act before the committee, the concern among my community centres on the question of subsidies for the extended day portion of the all-day learning project; for example, section 25 of the act dealing with the amendments to section 2.2 and subsection 18(1) of the Day Nurseries Act.

These sections provide for negotiations, agreements and arrangements between the government and the school boards and municipalities regarding fee subsidies for low-income families taking part in the extended day portion of all-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. But there is no clear guarantee of entitlement for low-income families to participate in the extended daycare programs. There is not even a clearly stated policy that fee subsidies will be ensured for every child who requires one.

My community would like the government to take the bill back and put guarantees into it that no child will be left out because her family can't afford fees for extended care.

The laws of Ontario already provide for the entitlement of low-income families to child care fee subsidies. But the provincial contribution to the cost-sharing of these subsidies with the cities has been capped. Our entitlements are unfunded. We are not being cynical when we ask for some guarantees in writing in the legislation for the entitlement of low-income families.

Moving forward, we would also like to see more transparency and less political spin in connection with the implementation of the early learning plan. People's lives are severely impacted by policies on this question, even on the timing of the policies. Important decisions like buying houses, having children and which com-

munity to live in all hinge on these policies. People have a right to be informed about the policies being developed and have an opportunity to make their views known. There was an obscene haste and secretiveness associated with phase 1 of the ELP project that is unacceptable.

It is not being cynical to ask for consultation or for fee subsidy guarantees to be written into the act because it seems like the government doesn't even realize there is a problem. The website of the Ministry of Child and Youth Services talks about "keeping licensed child care accessible for all families." For the government's information, licensed child care is not accessible for most families, and certainly not for Toronto's low-income families. There are almost 90,000 low-income children eligible for child care fee subsidies, including 17,000 children on the official waiting list. But the provincial government only funds 24,000 children.

Low-income women have many allies who will be appearing here, including the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, OPSEU, CUPE, the teachers' federations and other trade unions, as well as Campaign 2000 and other agencies. They will make a good business case for Ontario replacing the \$63 million a year that Stephen Harper diverted out of the low-income subsidies into vote-buying schemes. We stand with these allies on this issue. Six months ago, Deb Matthews, then child and youth minister, told a group of women from our community that the Ontario government was digging in on this and not going to replace the federal money. This was not accepted by our community then, and it is still an unacceptable position.

I am only a newcomer, here, but I know that social policy is clearly a provincial responsibility. The provincial government should take up its responsibility. People are sick of the blame game among levels of government. Do your job, please.

While we support our allies' position on the missing \$63 million, we are also here to say that the status quo on the underfunding of subsidies is unacceptable. Putting back the \$63 million that Harper took out isn't enough. Maintaining the current system that excludes most low-income women and children will not do.

Our communities need the province to fully fund the child care entitlements of low-income families. This is a matter of the fundamental right of people in our communities to live in dignity. The government should write low-income subsidies into the current bill. It should uncap the funding for transfers to the cities to eliminate the waiting lists. There is no excuse for not doing so.

Ontario is crying poor these days, but Ontario's economy is still more than twice the size of Quebec's. Yet Quebec spends three times more per child than Ontario on child care—twice as much in absolute terms. People know about the discrepancy. People also know that the dependency rate, the participation of women in the labour force and the productivity of female workers have all improved in Quebec since a universal child care system was introduced. Poverty has decreased. People

know that there is nothing stopping Ontario except the political will to do so.

When our allies appear, they will say that they are glad to see that the government, at least in words, has finally accepted a small portion of its responsibility to provide child care and early learning to parents without cost. We, too, see that this legislation represents some progress, provided that in the details low-income families are not excluded. The bill requires some guarantees for low-income subsidies and some consultation with communities written in.

But first and foremost, we want the government to start fully funding the legislation that it already has on its books to support low-income families. Then, children and youth services won't be lying when it brags about "keeping licensed child care accessible for all families." Then our families won't be excluded.

I'm coming for the communities that were designated as poor communities. We are excluded from full-day kindergarten. We went to the principal, we went to the

trustee, we went every place to ask why we were being excluded. We didn't get any kind of explanation from them, and we didn't get any answer about what their plan is for the next year. Are we in the second phase or not? We are frustrated, and we really need an answer from the government. What is their plan for this low-income group of women, and what is their plan to implement full-day kindergarten for our school?

Thanks, everyone.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Jahangir, and thank you as well for your exactly timed remarks of 10 minutes. I'd like to thank you on behalf of the committee for your presence today on behalf of the South Asian Women's Rights Organization.

Just to alert the committee, as we have a number of francophones, nous clôturons les travaux de notre comité à 16 h demain to another room, room 151, beginning at 4 p.m. sharp.

Committee adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1801.

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