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# **Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

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**Thursday, May 3, 2007**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Dean Allison**

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## Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Thursday, May 3, 2007

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)):** As to the order of reference of November 22, the committee will now resume its study of Bill C-303.

I'd just like to thank all the witnesses for being here today. I know we have a couple via video conference.

We can start with you, Mr. Quist. We'll have you start, for seven minutes. We'll move then to Ms. Smith, Ms. Ward, Ms. Coupal, and Ms. Landriault.

If we can get started, I'll give you a two minute- then a one-minute warning, just so you can gauge your speech from there. It'll be followed by a round of seven minutes, followed by subsequent rounds of five minutes each.

Mr. Quist, once again, welcome, and thank you for being here today. You have seven minutes, sir.

**Mr. Dave Quist (Executive Director, Institute of Marriage and Family Canada):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and to all members of the committee, for the opportunity to present information for your consideration on Bill C-303.

The Institute of Marriage and Family Canada is a research think tank designed to draw together the social science on issues such as the raising of our children. We believe that you, the decision-makers, should consider all the factors involved when making these decisions. To this end, I'm pleased to present a cross-section of some of our work for your consideration.

Much of this research comes out of documents before you, and it's also available in full on our website at [imfcanada.org](http://imfcanada.org).

One of the crucial pieces of the child care debate is to best determine what it is that parents actually want. There's much rhetoric and a variety of polls of various levels of quality that have been done on this very question. Of primary importance is for officials to not presume what parents of young children want, but to actually ask them. To this end, one year ago we published the results of a survey that delved directly into this question. Copies of this poll have been included in the package that you have before you at this time.

Although there's a lot of information in the survey, please allow me to highlight just a couple of the key pieces that are pertinent to your debate today.

Of the parents who have young children and who may be actually accessing child care, 78% indicated they would prefer if a parent were able to stay home to raise their children. This did not change significantly when we factored in the gender of the parents, the geographic region they came from, or their respective level of education.

Of course, we know that having one parent stay at home is not always feasible, whether this is due to single-parent families, fiscal constraints, or other logistical considerations. To this end, we then asked the respondents what their preference for child care would be. The results that we found were quite dramatic. A majority of 53% indicated they would prefer a relative to care for their child; the following 20% preferred a family child care setting; and trailing were non-profit child care, at less than 17%, and for-profit child care, at a low of 7%.

Again, these results did not change across different break-outs based upon geography, income or education levels, marital status, urban versus rural settings, or gender. One notable exception is that the Quebec respondents had almost an even split between a relative or family child care for their child. If we adjust the results for those parents who have children under six years of age, the results remain almost identical.

It's clear to me from these empirical findings that the intent of Bill C-303 is not in keeping with what Canadian parents desire. We believe that each family has its own unique challenges, and a one-size-fits-all program is not in Canadian parents' best interest.

We believe that the government needs to honour the choices of parents, who are best positioned to nurture and raise their children. Parents who need child care for their children should be allowed to do so in the manner they deem appropriate for their circumstances.

Clause 4 of Bill C-303 notes that the Province of Quebec may exempt itself from the provisions of this bill. My assumption is that this is because Quebec has a form of provincial child care already in place. From listening to previous witnesses, I think the Quebec model has been held up as how a national child care program should indeed be structured.

With all due respect to those who are involved with the Quebec child care program, the latest evaluations clearly show some substantial failings. According to Pierre Lefebvre, professor of economics at the Université du Québec à Montréal, the Quebec policy “favours higher income families, is unfair to families who choose to care for their children themselves or do not use non-parental child care, and is not well suited to parents working part time or non-standard hours.”

Professor Lefebvre continues: “Children from low-income or less-educated families may be triply disadvantaged by being less likely to receive stimulating care at home, less likely to be enrolled in educationally oriented care outside the home and more likely to be receiving low-quality service when they are in child care.”

The economics of the system have left parents worse off. “By its very nature, the \$7-a-day child care model favours a specific type of child care setting that is subsidized and state-regulated. It benefits certain parents to the detriment of others,” writes Norma Kozhaya of the Montreal Economic Institute in an October 2006 briefing note on Quebec’s child care system.

One of the main problems with child care in Quebec, using data from the Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development, is that children, while in a safe environment, are not learning. According to an Institute for Research on Public Policy report: “The majority of child care settings attended by the children in the QLSCD had a global rating of minimal quality, which means that they provided safety and security for the children but offered a minimal educational component.”

It’s also important to note that the CBC reports there’s a waiting list of 35,000 children in Quebec, and that Quebec immigration actually tells new immigrants to that province that there is a one- to two-year waiting list for child care.

•(1535)

In light of this comparison and the other research that’s readily available to you today, the IMFC is opposed to a national system of early learning and child care as proposed in Bill C-303. It allots money preferentially to one type of care: centre-based or institutional care. It therefore does not help parents make choices. It offers one solution alone, at great cost, to the detriment of those who do not make that choice. We believe this is discriminatory.

We would point this committee to research from the U.S.-based NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, the largest, most expensive child care study ever undertaken—it has been running for close to 25 years now—which has been examining the long-term effects of all types of child care on children.

The researchers have found that high-quality non-maternal care, including that by fathers and grandparents, improves cognitive outcomes, things like a child’s vocabulary and memory, but that too much time in centre-based care, even high-quality centre-based care, was related to poor behaviours, including hitting others and arguing a lot. In their latest research this spring, the researchers have shown that this negative behaviour is measurable up to and including the sixth grade.

In short, while there are benefits to high-quality care, those benefits are not limited to centre-based care, such as the care

proposed under Bill C-303. Rather, the benefits are seen in many different types of care in more informal settings. The drawbacks, like increased aggression in children, are seen in poor-quality centre-based care. Currently, care in Quebec is described as mediocre. High-quality care under a state-run, state-financed system is difficult to create.

There are other issues that should be addressed here; unfortunately, time does not permit me to address those. However, in conclusion, I’ll say I believe you cannot measure this issue through strictly economic calculations. These are our children, our future, and they must be measured accordingly. We must hold ourselves to a higher standard.

While we recognize there is a need for high-quality child care within society, this one-size-fits-all approach does not meet the needs of many families and cannot be supported. This bill does not address the needs of the majority of Canadians who do not wish to use institutionalized child care.

I thank the committee for your attention. I would be pleased to address any questions you have in the discussion following.

Thank you.

•(1540)

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

We’re now going to move over, via teleconference, to Ms. Smith.

Ms. Smith, where are you joining us from today?

**Ms. Beverley Smith (As an Individual):** I’m in London.

**The Chair:** Thank you for being here.

You have seven minutes. I’ll try to give you a two-minute warning and then one as you move through your presentation.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** Thank you for inviting me. I’m pleased to be here.

I’m particularly impressed with the teleconference, which is, I think, a way to get a lot more public and women’s involvement in issues.

When you are discussing Bill C-303, I have to say that it’s pretty well impossible to be against a bill to benefit children. I have, for 30 years now, argued for you to be looking at issues like this, to spend more money on children’s care, to value the role of the person taking care of children, and to notice that these are pivotal years for the education of children, so that’s all good.

I'm not here to criticize the bill for what it says, so much as to criticize it for what it doesn't say. It is actually excluding some important considerations legally and ethically. I've been a long-time promoter of women's rights, to value our paid labour and our unpaid labour, and to value children's rights. This bill is working for educational stimulation, health and safety, the right of women to participate fully in society in ways that they wish. All of those are good goals, but this bill is a problem because it doesn't go far enough.

This bill doesn't give all children benefit. It looks at only one lifestyle and gives it the benefits. That's a concern. So this bill, although good, needs a sister bill in order to be fair. It needs a partner to value what it left out. It did leave out children who are not in the child care settings being provided for—the third-party, non-family-based care. That is actually the majority of children. It omitted children in parental care or grandparent care; the care of a day home, a trusted neighbour, a sitter; home-schooled children; in the care of parents who telecommute, parents who take the child to paid work, parents who do paid work evenings only and weekends off-shifting. These people are also parents and they're also offering care of children, and they vote.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Canada signed at the United Nations, said a child has the right to be raised in the presence of the parents, wherever possible, and if the parents choose to assign a caregiver, trusting the best judgment of the parents, the caregiver can be anyone who shares their values, their language, their culture, and the things they want to endorse. The parents are the ones trusted to know the best interests of the child.

Children outside the centres are valuable too. This bill has forgotten them. In section 15 of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we're told that we have to give equal benefit under the law to all children. So Bill C-303's problem is that it's not universal. It says it gives universal access, but that's a legalistic trick and couldn't hold up under a court. Access to agreeing with a policy isn't really access to equal benefit under the law.

Bill C-303 suggests a majority of women now earn, so they need this bill. In fact, it says its purpose is to help women earn. That's a problem, actually, because if we're going to value care of children, we shouldn't as a main focus be valuing those who are not caring for children. Many women in fact do earn, but they do so from home or part-time and aren't using the third-party-care style.

So this is not in any way a universal benefit program.

You have been told there are wait lists of children who need this service. That may be true in some ways, but the wait lists are a little bit inflated, because children's names appear on several lists and there are names on those lists of children not even born. So it's a little deceptive, and we're not sure the wait-list people are not just waiting for the funding.

Proponents say there's a patchwork of services and we need to standardize. You know, in a democracy a patchwork is actually a good thing because it's a quilt, it's diversity. What we have to be really wary of is something that requires a standardized one-size-fits-all treatment. That's what got us in trouble before.

Proponents of Bill C-303 say universal child care is like medicare. Universal child care is not like medicare. We all risk emergency need of medical assistance if we have sudden illness or injury. Because of that equal risk we have, we pay a universal payment for health care. Child care centres are not locations of emergency risk, and employees are key, but they're not experts the way that medical doctors are experts.

● (1545)

Proponents of Bill C-303 say it's like universal education. We should start it from birth. The problem is that they don't have a monopoly on education. A child is born learning; it's born ready to learn. So although a child may learn in your child care centre, it's not learning any differently from or any better than in some very high-quality homes. Therefore, we should value education wherever it's happening.

Schooling and medical care are actually moving away from the one-size-fits-all formula for funding institutions. They're actually moving towards funding the home. We're trying to get more people cared for medically in the home. It saves money.

We're trying to get diversity for home schooling and other kinds of education to match the needs of the children. So to move to a one-size-fits-all standard is out of touch with what's currently found to be best.

Also, Bill C-303 will cost \$10,000 per child per year. Just for the preschoolers in the country, it would \$20 billion. The day care federations are saying that their goal is to provide a day care space for every child in the country. We simply cannot afford that.

Let's look at what we can afford that is still of universal benefit. The only way we could make that affordable is to raise taxes, as they do in Sweden, to a 60% tax rate.

**The Chair:** You have one minute left.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** That's fine.

What I'm suggesting regarding Bill C-303 is that for those children who do actually prefer third party child care, it's fine. But unless you also value the child care happening in all those other locations, this bill should not fly and will not be popular with voters. It's certainly not fair to children the way it stands.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Smith.

We're now going to move to Ms. Ward, via video conference. You have seven minutes.

Are you there?

Okay, we're going to move along to Ms. Coupal. We'll come back to Ms. Ward when we iron this out.

You have seven minutes, please.

[Translation]

**Ms. Yvonne Coupal (Coordinator, Citizens in Favour of Equal Government Childcare Subsidies for All Children):** Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the opportunity to testify today.

[English]

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the opportunity to testify today.

[Translation]

Let's start at the end. We respectfully recommend the following.

Firstly, all federal MPs elected to ridings in Quebec have the moral obligation to vote against Bill C-303, or at the very least, to abstain from all future votes. Bill C-303 discriminates against the children of Canada by showing prejudice and favouring only one type of child care: that of third-party child care.

Secondly, clause 4 must be deleted from Bill C-303 because it discriminates against nine provinces and the territories in Canada. It demonstrates clear prejudice by favouring one province, Quebec, which is exempted from the constraints provided by the standards, the conditions and the accountability provisions. In addition, the clause will create an intentional fiscal imbalance should it remain in the bill.

Thirdly, all reference to universality in Bill C-303 must be removed because universality is not only unrealistic, it is also fiscally unwise.

Even now we are having difficulty paying for our legislation. If bill C-303 is passed, we are doomed to pay for it with our collective credit card, also dooming the same children whom we say we want to help to bear a huge financial burden. How ironic! Ultimately, the children will be paying the bill. The pernicious effects of universality are creeping into our elementary schools in Quebec. The quality of life, the air quality and the lack of space are deplorable, because, in large part, of the universality of before-school and after-school child care programs that destroy our school infrastructure and undermine the healthy educational climate. There are only so many fish that you cram into a can, even when they are sardines. The can has a lid, but there is no lid on school infrastructure in Quebec because no-one has the courage to put a lid on Utopia. What will it take to do it one day? At the moment, ladies and gentlemen, mum's the word.

• (1550)

[English]

Let's start at the end. We respectfully recommend the following.

First, all federal MPs elected to ridings in Quebec have the moral obligation to vote against Bill C-303, or at the very least abstain from all future votes. Bill C-303 discriminates against the children of Canada by showing prejudice and favouring only one type of child care above all others: that of third party child care.

Delete clause 4 from Bill C-303 because it discriminates against nine provinces and three territories in Canada. It demonstrates clear prejudice by favouring one province, Quebec, over and above all others, as Quebec is exempted from the restrictive standards and conditions that will be applied.

In addition, it will create—intentionally, imagine—a new fiscal imbalance, should this remain within the bill.

[Translation]

I always ask myself the same questions in circumstances like these. How many of us went to daycare when we were little? The average age of your committee is around 46. I really doubt that many of you have any experience of daycare at all. If you did, how many went full time, five days a week?

[English]

And how many of us who did not attend day care as children—because we might have benefited from other care settings, like our own homes, or with a relative, grandmas, and neighbours—would have preferred to go to day care? Each of us knows the answer deep down inside.

[Translation]

Above all we must not deny this feeling because we have already come out in favour of C-303. There is still enough time to look once more at the whole question of child care inclusively rather than to start from a biased position that favours third-party care.

[English]

As adults, we're obliged to take a serious look at the past 10 years of Quebec's day care experiment before short-sightedly imposing a utopian dream, a dream for which the supposed benefits remain unproven to this day.

[Translation]

Quebec MPs are well aware of parents' concerns with third-party child care. Those who use the services know the current shortcomings: a rigid schedule, Monday to Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., no part-time service, no right to pay extra for better services for their children, even out of their own pockets. All in the name of universality.

[English]

**The Chair:** We're not getting translation.

Okay, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Yvonne Coupal:** Am I too fast for the lady?

**The Chair:** No, it's just a technical glitch.

**Ms. Yvonne Coupal:** Where would you like me to start from, since my translation was picked?

[Translation]

The list goes on.

[English]

On the other hand, there are many responsible parents who would prefer to receive money, now being paid out by government directly to the day cares, in order to provide their own child's care themselves—what a concept.

[Translation]

Quebec parents are fed up, and they showed it when they realized that they were being penalized for looking after their own children. They showed it last March 26, in the provincial election.

[English]

So look, let's put all the children of Canada first. They're really the upcoming Team Canada of our future.

[Translation]

Let's put all the children of Canada first. They are the Team Canada of our future.

[English]

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. *Merci beaucoup.*

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Coupal.

We're now going to move to Ms. Landriault.

**Mrs. Sara Landriault (President, National Family Childcare Association):** I'm actually not French. I can't really even say my own last name. I did marry one, so it's 50-50 in our house.

Listening to Dave, Yvonne and Bev, I'm only going to give you a quick introduction of who I am and I'll skip my speech, because it's all the same thing. We all want choice.

My name is Sara Landriault. I am a stay-at-home mom with three girls. I was yesterday, I am today, I will be tomorrow. Whether I go back down to \$10,000 a year, \$50,000 a year, or \$150,000 a year, I will fight my butt off to do that because it's what I believe. But it's not what my neighbours believe and it's not what everybody else believes. They all have their different choices. I want their choices respected as much as mine.

I've started a group, and it's the fault of you guys—no offence. It's a grassroots organization called National Family Childcare Association. We came about because of bills like this, and when the Liberals were introducing the national day care last year, or the year before. We came about because it made us mad. We're sitting on the couches eating bonbons, watching soap operas—whatever you guys believe we're doing. It really ticked us off.... Sorry, I try not to swear.

So I did something. I've e-mailed every one of you. I'm sorry I don't speak French. I have tried, and my translator has been busy lately. I have e-mailed each one of you my thoughts. Sometimes I'm angry, sometimes I'm not. Today we're in a good mood because I'm not angry; I'm terrified at speaking in front of you.

It's not that we don't want the bill. The NFCA, I myself, everybody involved in it—we want a bill like this. We simply want a bill that's going to help all of us, because there are families out there—and you will be introduced to them—that are making \$20,000 and \$30,000 a year with three or four kids, or more, or less, that are at home. Okay, they're eating their Kraft Dinner, they're driving beat-up old cars, they need new tires, they need this, they need that. They're not putting their kids in hockey, not because they don't want to but because they can't. They simply believe in caring for their own children, and that's what they want to do. There should be no discrimination toward them, and no discrimination to women who want to go out and work, get paid for it, and move up the

corporate ladder, or stay at McDonald's. I mean, there should be no difference between any of us. We should all be respected as parents.

I don't even extend the “as women” bit, because lots of dads are staying at home. There are men's groups popping up all over the place—dads at home, stay-at-home dads. It's not all about being a mom. It's about being a parent. Whether you're straight, gay, black, white, it doesn't matter. We're parents. We should be respected for what we believe is right with our children. Sorry, I didn't mean to yell that at you.

You can read the rest in the briefs I've put in, but honestly, they have said everything I could have said on the statistics. I am no scholar. I'm not going to give you the right statistics; they're actually better off with that. I get what I get off the Internet at home. My computer's in my bedroom with a bunch of files called “Childcare”.

For anything else you want, please feel free to ask me any questions.

● (1555)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Landriault.

We're now going to move to Ms. Ward. Could you make sure the mute button is not on? I'm sure once you start talking the video will pick you up.

Ms. Ward.

**Ms. Helen Ward (President, Kids First Parent Association of Canada):** Hello, can you hear me?

**The Chair:** We're making progress. We can hear and see you.

Welcome. You have seven minutes.

**Ms. Helen Ward:** Thank you.

Kids First Parent Association of Canada began in 1987 with two objectives: support for the optimal care of children, and support and recognition for parental child care. Unlike the day care lobby, we are 100% volunteer-run and are neither founded nor funded by government, unions, or corporations.

Personally, I am a low-income, single mother in what others call poverty. The day care lobby has a paternalistic habit of speaking on behalf of women like me without our consent, which feminists call appropriation of voice. I understand that you have also been speaking about women like me, so I'm sure you'll be glad to listen to one of us.

Though most of my work is unpaid, I have been doing paid work since four months after giving birth. I have both used and provided high-quality child care and early learning in parent-regulated situations without state involvement.

Kids First opposes this bill. Our reasons include the following.

This bill promotes the false premise that child care and early learning are defined as government-regulated situations only. This discriminatory, exclusive definition is not found in any peer-reviewed research. Child care is the care of a child. Early learning is the learning a child does, and a child care space is a space a child is in.

All children need child care 24/7, 365. This is a universal essential need. We are fully in favour of child care and early learning, and of course research shows that it's good for children. They'd die without it. However, no peer-reviewed research shows long hours in group care improve children's long-term outcomes, and no peer-reviewed research supports the hypothesis that day care expenditures produce returns of \$2 or \$7 or \$16 per dollar spent. This bill is another crass attempt by the day care lobby to hijack all funding for child care and early learning by hijacking these definitions.

If you are truly concerned that mothers are poor or that families have no choice, empower us. Fund families directly with the money now spent on day care spaces and bureaucracies. That's over \$20,000 a year for one infant. This bill is based on a campaign of disinformation intended to manufacture consent for unmarketable, hidden agendas. You've heard of activist judges. We are concerned about activist statisticians.

One untruth is that 70% of mothers are working. All mothers are working mothers. Dr. Donna Lero has worked for Statistics Canada and says that this 70% is for paid, full-time work, including mothers of infants and toddlers. Actually, only about 6%, and not 70%, of mothers of children under three spend 30 hours or more per week on a job.

A hidden fact is that only 14.9% of children six months to five years are in day care centres. You can find this fact buried on page 97 of the 99-page Statistics Canada 2006 report. They did not publicize this fact, and instead their press release says 54% are in child care, giving the false impression that day care is the norm.

Another fact is that wait lists are bogus. They are reservation lists at best. Names are multiple-listed, put on far in advance of possible use, and not removed. Using these lists as an indicator of demand is an indicator of the abysmal level of day care scholarship. In fact, hard data from the *You Bet I Care!* report from B.C. and Toronto show that vacancies are common in day care centres and indicate an excess of supply over demand.

Another false premise of this bill is that regulation by government assures high quality in child care and early learning. It doesn't. Canadian studies such as *You Bet I Care!* and *Quality Counts!* find that the majority of licensed day care is of minimal to mediocre quality in Canada and Quebec. Even in Sweden, the ministry of education reports that poor quality is pervasive in day care there.

One key reason for poor quality is poor allowable staff-child ratios. A U.S. study found that with ratios of one staff to three or four children ages 14 to 24 months, fully 45% did not receive adequate caregiving, and fully 50% did not receive adequate developmental activities. But ratios in Quebec and Ontario are one to five for under 18 months. At 18 months in Quebec, it jumps to one staff for eight. These are the same bad ratios found in Australia, where for-profit day care chains dominate.

Dr. Jay Belsky, internationally renowned developmental scientist, called this "a licence to neglect".

• (1600)

Dr. Edward Zigler, Yale child development guru, has said licensed day care provides "psychological thalidomide".

Another false premise of this bill is that it is about children's "well-being", as the preamble mentions. The strange mix of bedfellows that make up the day care lobby is dominated by the corporate right. This includes the OECD and Fraser Mustard's backers, the World Bank and the Royal Bank of Canada. These entities are not known promoters of children's well-being or justice for women. What is the left, the NDP, doing in bed with the World Bank? With socialists like this, who needs capitalists?

Dr. Mustard's organization's chairman, Charles Coffey, is also the vice-president of the Royal Bank of Canada. In a speech to the World Bank, he states that early child development is "a business imperative". He looks to investment opportunities, including "data collection", and indeed he praises Dr. Clyde Hertzman of UBC, who is now busy harvesting children's private data from "preconception to early adulthood".

The OECD ideologues reject what they call "the ideology of the family" and say that we are in transition to a new order of greater state intervention in the family and something called "the new child" and "the public child". Try to sell that to the voters.

The corporate right's hidden agenda is partly for day care to "subsidize low wage employment ('welfare in work')". We call their misogynistic so-called post-familialist policies with jobs for moms in the forced labour force.

We urge you to dump this bill and revive the Liberal government's 1999 policy, which embraced equality and stated that policies should "neither encourage nor penalize caregiving choices".

Thank you.

• (1605)

**The Chair:** I was just about to give you another 15 minutes, but no, you're out of time.



Thank you very much, Ms. Ward.

We're now going to move along to our questions by our members of Parliament. We're going to start with the opposition Liberals. The first round will be seven minutes, as I said, followed by a couple of rounds of five minutes.

Ms. Dhalla, you have seven minutes.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

It's a good thing our chair has to be neutral, so he can't partake in any questioning.

First of all, I wanted to thank all of you for coming here. I think out of today's presentations it's extremely unfortunate that we are actually having a debate and listening to testimony that is pitting stay-at-home moms against working mothers against parents that have chosen, both mothers and fathers, to put their children in non-profit day cares or profit day cares or put them in whatever day care space is available to them within their particular community.

I heard a number of comments from all witnesses in regard to inflated wait lists. I believe that in Ottawa there is one centralized waiting list, and taking a look at that waiting list, there are over 10,000 children on that particular waiting list. In other communities there are not opportunities for individuals or parents to have centralized waiting lists.

When you take a look at Ottawa alone, I believe it's certainly not a list that has been inflated, because when you talk to parents across this country you realize they have to wait years and years to ensure their children actually get access into day care spaces that are high quality, that are universal, and that are affordable.

I wanted to touch upon something that I believe Ms. Ward has stated in the past. Can you tell us who your organization is funded by?

**Ms. Helen Ward:** There's no paid staff at all in Kids First. We are funded by donations from anybody who gives us money. Right now, actually, we have no money; we're in the hole. If you would be so kind as to donate, we'd be very happy to receive your donations. We are not funded by any political party or anything else.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** I'm sure the Conservatives, who are in government right now, may think of an opportunity to do that funding on their own account with their new funding mechanisms for day care.

But I want to find something out. You made a quote—and correct me if I'm wrong—where you said, “To me, it's part of their accountability concern. We're funding lobby groups”—“we” being Canadians, I guess, or Conservatives or the government—“with public dollars, millions and millions of dollars.”

While your own group is not government funded, you had attended a meeting that was organized by the Prime Minister's Office in regard to consultation for day care. Is that correct?

**Ms. Helen Ward:** That was in November 2005. He wasn't the Prime Minister, and my flight was paid for by donations to Kids First from various individuals. And we received zero—that's zero—

money from any Conservatives that I know of and any corporations and any government entities.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** When he had the accommodations...you were going after the child care advocacy groups that are receiving funding, to ensure they do proper research. I have many reports in front of me that have been done by some of those advocacy associations.

At that particular time you were lambasting some of these great organizations that have done a tremendous amount of work in doing research or in reaching out to stakeholders and providing data and research, but meanwhile the Prime Minister's Office had paid for your accommodations. Is that correct?

**Ms. Helen Ward:** One of our supporters phoned and was angry that I was going to be staying at the youth hostel in Ottawa while I was there. She asked them if they would cover my accommodation cost, which they offered to do, and which we declined. That would have been about \$200 for my accommodation. That was paid for by donations to Kids First.

Your efforts to discredit our organization by saying we're funded by some right-wing organization of the government are totally ridiculous, completely unfounded, and very insulting.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** To be honest, I don't think you should be insulted at all. No one is trying to discredit you; we were simply trying to clarify issues that had been put forward to us. You're here as a witness, and we're simply asking you questions. There's no reason to get insulted here. You have made a lot of comments in your testimony that were perhaps insulting to many parents across this country who have children in day care spaces.

Today we are here debating a bill to try to determine the best process to achieve the best for our children in this country. I believe, as Ms. Coupal had put it, our children are our future. We may disagree on the process, but at the end of the day we are all here to ensure that we invest in early learning and child care.

No one is trying to discredit your organization; we're simply trying to clarify some facts.

● (1610)

**Ms. Helen Ward:** Good.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** This is to all the witnesses.

The Conservatives have put forward \$250 million into the provinces to ensure the creation of day care spaces. Is anyone around this table familiar with any initiatives that provinces have done to ensure that the \$250 million is going to have an accountability mechanism to ensure there are spaces created?

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** Could I speak to that?

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** The understanding I have is that when the Liberals came across the country with Mr. Dryden offering those arrangements, they put a condition on the funding: it was to be only for the creation of child care spaces. The Government of Alberta did not want that condition placed on it and wanted to find a way to also fund parents at home, but was told they couldn't have any money unless they went along with just the child care funding. The Government of New Brunswick felt similarly; they said they couldn't afford to walk away from that money, but didn't like the conditions.

I think the way the Conservatives have been trying to handle it is to provide the transfer payments. I'm not an apologist for them and I'm not quite sure what they're planning, but I think this bill has the same problem that the Conservative policy has. It is trying to focus on one style of care, which is not fair, and a lot of parents do not want you to put those conditions on that money.

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** I don't like to follow McGuinty too often, but in the Best Start program last year—and it was still under the Conservative government—12,000 or 15,000 new spaces were created, plus the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario has a few hundred spaces on top of that.

Don't get me wrong; I want spaces created. I would really like to have high quality and affordability and so on, but our definitions are different. Affordable would be everybody's definition, but high quality, to me, would be one I could walk into and spend a week or two with these people, whether it's private, a home day care, a centre-based day care, or a non-profit day care. I have used a couple of day cares myself for my oldest child.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Any spaces that were created by Mr. McGuinty were due to the funding from early learning and child care for the one-year period that was carried over by the Conservative government.

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** Yes, but it was still under the Conservative government.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** They carried over the great Liberal plan of early learning and child care.

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** Yes, I know; they extended it until March. It just finished in March of this year, didn't it?

**The Chair:** We'll have to try to catch Ms. Coupal on the next round.

We're going to go to Mr. Lessard, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am quite perturbed by the presentations that are being made to us today. Generally people who come before us provide quite rational reasoning in the context of their expertise, their objective and their position on a situation. They come to share different opinions — very different at times — but every time, it is done with structured and respectful reasoning.

But good heavens, it is quite offensive for you to come here and tell us that child care in Quebec is mediocre without a word on how that opinion is arrived at. In Quebec, we do not claim to have the best possible child care, but it is child care that families want, and

want to preserve. So all this is showing a great lack of respect for the people of Quebec.

When you provoke, and spew venom, as Ms. Coupal did to support her views, it is not only harmful, it is disrespectful, given the opportunity she has been given to speak on behalf of the people she represents, if indeed she represents anyone at all. When we are told that we are prescribing “psychological thalidomide“, it seems to me that she has a problem understanding the work we do here.

Earlier, I asked my colleague if she knew these organizations. She said no. I do not know them either. We understand that, on occasion, individuals can appear and express their opinion, and so on, like Ms. Ward did earlier. That is no problem as long as it is done in a way that gives people credit for some intelligence.

Still, I would like to check. I have here a publication from the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, a journal, very well-prepared documents. Researchers, especially economists, are involved, and have as their mission to educate families, to do research, to come up with innovations in family policy, etc. So it is quite disconcerting to hear the views that have been submitted to us today.

Following the lead of our Liberal colleague Ms. Dhalla, I would like to know what your specific situation is, Mr. Quist. Whom do you represent? Does your organization have members? Who are they? Who finances you? Could you tell us, so that we can try to see where you are coming from? I have read your documents, and I have not found anything about that.

•(1615)

[*English*]

**Mr. Dave Quist:** Thank you very much.

In several orders there we are funded completely by foundations and independent donors. We're the policy arm of Focus on the Family Canada. We have been in operation for just over one year now. We receive no funding from any level of government, nor have we asked for it. We're quite upfront about that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Who are your donors? What is Focus on the Family Canada?

For us, it is an abstraction. You come and wag your finger at Quebec. So we would like to know if you are a credible organization with a recognized social base.

I could create a structure with mysterious financing too. Where does your money come from? Is it from religious groups, political groups, universities, financial people? Where does your money come from?

[*English*]

**Mr. Dave Quist:** As I indicated, we are funded by independent donors and private foundations. We have no affiliation with any university funding or government funding in any way, shape, or form.

The quotes that I pulled for you, sir, were not actually my personal —

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Where do you get your money? What interests are supporting you?

Opinions are one thing, but your evidence today just does not hold water when it comes to recognized analysis. People have come here opposing the bill and made us think about parts of it because they had a logical approach supported by research.

You are making statements that appear gratuitous to me, and seem to come from special interests. Where do you get your money?

[English]

**Mr. Dave Quist:** I've answered that question twice now, sir.

Through the chair, let me just say that it's not my opinions I was actually expressing, but rather, quotes from the Montreal Economic Institute, which I did quote directly during my presentation.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Now we are getting somewhere. The Montreal Economic Institute, that's something else. If they come here, will they say the same thing as you? That's a start. Does it give you money?

[English]

**Mr. Dave Quist:** No, sir. I hold up their document here from October 2006, their economic note.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** It does not give you money. So who does?

[English]

**Mr. Dave Quist:** They are the ones that indicated—

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Where do you get your money, Mr. Quist? Who supports you? Where do you get your money?

[English]

**Mr. Dave Quist:** How much clearer can I be, sir?

We have private foundations and private independent donors. If other records are indicated, we file with the Canada Revenue Agency through Focus on the Family Canada, which has been in Canada for almost 25 years as a non-denominational support group for families all across Canada.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Mr. Quist, we have a responsibility here. We have to put your opinion into the form of a report and make recommendations to the House of Commons. We have to know on whose behalf you are speaking. So who is it? That is all I am asking. When someone comes here, says that his name is Yves Lessard and that he would like to present evidence on his own behalf, he does so as Yves Lessard. If you are here as Dave Quist, the same applies. But you are here in the name of an organization called the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. Someone is behind that, someone calls the shots. Where do you get your money? When we know who pays the bills, we know who is talking.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Lessard, that's all the time we have. You had seven minutes, sir.

• (1620)

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** I'll give him two minutes of my time.

**The Chair:** No, you won't. You're going to have seven minutes.

Nice try, though.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** He was very generous the last time.

**The Chair:** I didn't realize we had the discretion of the chair until last week. I'll have to go away a little more often to find out how to do this job better.

Go ahead, Ms. Chow. You have seven minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Mr. Chair, I recognize that it is your job to keep order, but would you not agree with me that we need to know who is behind Mr. Quist, and we do not.

[English]

**The Chair:** I thought he was pretty clear on that.

Go ahead, Ms. Chow.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Chair, the reason I did that is that Mr. Lessard was generous enough at the end of the last meeting—

**An hon. member:** I heard there was hara-kiri all over—

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** No, he was offering time for each other, and Mr. Savage was also, so there was a great deal of—

**An hon. member:** A great deal of consideration.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** That is why I continue that tradition.

I have some letters here. One is from British Columbia, and there is a huge number of letters, over 200, but I thought I would pick one or two because they go into this whole argument about parents, stay-at-home moms and all that. Just give me a minute. I thought I'd read it. And of course they are writing that this legislation is good for children, families, our communities, and our economy.

One reads like this:

Currently fewer than 20% of families in BC have access to quality, regulated child care, yet our finance minister is proudly stating that "jobs are looking for people" in our province. Without a way to insure child care for parents, these jobs will continue to "look for people". How long will it be before employers leave the province if they can not find employees? Already 44% of BC employers are reporting labour shortages.

Child care is everyone's business! It affects multiple areas of our society—parents, children, employers, business owners, co-workers, and grandparents, to name a few.

We need to get past the argument "Should a parent (mother) stay at home to raise children rather than work?" The fact is "Parents (including mothers) work." The argument is a smoke screen that deflects the issue. The fact is some parents have to work—they have no choice. Parents who work need reliable, affordable, quality child care.

Provincial governments need to be accountable for the child care dollars they receive from the federal government. Bill C-303 will make provincial governments accountable for spending any money received for child care on child care".

And that's from Cathy Cross, Port Alberni, B.C.

I guess, Helen, you are from B.C. and others here are parents and mothers who are saying they have to work, maybe because the income level is not high, or the dad's income level is just not high enough, and this mom has to work. In that case, what do you do? You need to have child care—and quality child care.

There was discussion about training. If we have to have child care, then surely we need to have decent quality and training. If that is the case, then I know early childhood educators take two or three years of education in college, so they are very well trained. We want trained child care workers who get adequate pay so they can make a living, so they can take care of the kids of parents who work.

I see complete logic in all these letters. What would you say to a parent like Cathy Cross? What would she do to her parents?

**Ms. Helen Ward:** You seem to be confused about what the word “work” means. Every mother is a working mother. That's a feminist slogan promoted by the National Organization for Women in the United States.

What do you mean by stay-at-home versus working? I do paid work in my home and out of the home. I do unpaid work here and there. I'm not being paid right now and I'm working pretty hard.

When you talk about quality, that's very important. We are totally in favour of child care. We do child care. Child care means the care of a child, and parents like me...I'm a low-income, single parent. I'm the one you say you care about so much. But with the work I've done looking after my child, I've been subsidizing day care expenditures by being unpaid and unfinanced in the care that I do.

I know parents who both have full-time paid jobs who do not use and do not want to use day-care-centre-based care. They off-shift. They arrange their lives. Those who prefer and believe that day-care-centre-based care is the best care for their child and their family should use that care and try to find it, if that's what they believe is best, but first, they are entitled to accurate, full information about their choice, and second, they are not entitled to more financial support from the state for that particular choice. That was the Liberals' policy in 1999, and we would agree with that.

• (1625)

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Surely, I think, Mr. Quist would agree with this “love thy neighbour”, because I believe you are from a church-based organization, are funded a lot by religious organizations—

**A voice:** This has no bearing—

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Okay, whichever it is, we won't go into that.

Say your neighbour is a mother who works outside the home—to define it more precisely, in a hotel—and the father is driving taxi, with both of them working double shifts, working long hours. They're barely making their rent and are having a hard time putting enough food on the table, and their kids need high-quality child care. What do you do with a family like that?

In Ottawa, for example, there are 7,000 kids waiting for child care. In Toronto it's a huge number, sometimes 10,000 or 12,000. In Vancouver, B.C., I am sure there's a huge waiting list. What do you do with parents who end up working two or three shifts in order to make ends meet, and then the kids end up being at home, not being

taken care of, because there's no choice whatsoever? What do you say to those parents?

I don't know who would want to answer.

**The Chair:** I know that Sara is going to answer quickly, and then I know Ms. Smith wanted to throw in a response, but we have about thirty seconds left.

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** It's the same thing you say to your neighbour on the other side who is on welfare, a mom with three kids who decides not to go off welfare so she can be at home with her kids. It's the same thing. What are you going to say to her?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** She's being punished by the Conservative government. Because her income is below \$20,000, she won't get the new child tax supplement, and then because she's not working, she doesn't get the worker's tax benefit either.

**The Chair:** Now, we have a little bit of a debate going on here. We're over the seven minutes. We're going to move now to the final round.

I'm sorry, Ms. Smith, we'll have to catch you maybe in the next round here.

Ms. Yelich.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC):** I'd like to thank you all for coming.

I just want to emphasize that I think we do believe child care is very important, but I think we want choice, and that's what's missing here; this bill does not allow it.

I would like to know, Yvonne, if you have any comments, given that you come from Quebec. Did you have any comments?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Yvonne Coupal:** Mr. Lessard, earlier, you said that you were offended by remarks about the mediocrity of child care services in Quebec.

Professor Phillip Merrigan, from UQAM, in collaboration with Pierre Lefebvre, has written several comprehensive reports on the effects of day care on children. The last suggestion he gave me before I left Quebec was to ask for concrete evidence that every child in a Quebec day care is benefiting. No data provides that information. None at all.

[*English*]

There was also mention here about early childhood educators and how it's quite a high-profile profession now, with all the child care money that's being lauded. I would just like to say that something was changed in Quebec as far as their education is concerned.

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** There are a few points that I want to raise in my five or six minutes now.

Just for starters, I would note that we are doing this in three weeks, and I appreciate the volunteers being here in such a compacted timeframe. Look at the Canada Health Act. That was done through 10 years of federal-provincial negotiations. We are certainly trying to work on child care in a very brief timeframe.

The two areas I want to look at are the withholding of payments and also universality.

On the point of withholding of payments, I have concerns with that aspect of the bill, giving governments a tool to take away child care funding. That is what this bill does. If we look at the bare bones of it, it gives the federal government a tool to take child care money away. We saw that happen in 1993, when the Liberals were in power and took \$25 billion out of social transfers. We see McGuinty doing that now in Ontario. I don't know why we would want to give government another vehicle through Bill C-303 to take funds away from parents.

Right now we're all saying that we're in favour of child care, but there is \$2.4 billion going toward a universal child care benefit. Mr. Dion has already said that he doesn't support that. Are we going to take \$2.4 billion away from Canadian children? I'd be aghast at that. This bill would allow a Prime Minister to say to the provinces, "Do you know what? I'm not going to agree with sending you those social transfers." It happened in 1993. It could happen again. That's a reality.

On the point of universality, subclause 5(4) states that the criterion of universality must be met in order for a province to receive funding. Right now we know that the Quebec level is 50%. Ms. Savoie said that her view of universality is 54%. So already we're leaving a bar where there are different views of universality. If this bill is passed, technically the federal government could say no province—any province, not just Quebec—meets that and so none of them gets funding. This bill is certainly not thought out very clearly.

I imagine that many of the organizations here today have concerns with that.

There were some references paid to health care. I know that is something that has been brought up before in these hearings, the universal nature of our health care that we are all very proud of. In our health care system you're not going to tell five out of ten people who break their leg, "You're going to get no help from the government, you're going to get no help from hospitals", but that is what this does with children. It says to five out of ten children, "We're not going to help you". It picks and chooses winners. It picks and chooses parents. It picks favourites.

Government is not about picking favourites. You're saying to a dad who works a night shift, "We're not going to pick you". If we have a dad who wants to stay at home with his kids, we're saying according to this plan, "You're not one of us. You're not someone who we believe deserves support. Your children aren't good enough under this bill." That is just ludicrous. The government is not about picking favourites; all children need the benefit of the Canadian government to help them with child care.

I want to know your comments and your perspectives on those two fronts—one, on how this universality principle is actually not achieved, and two, about the withholding of funds and how that's dangerous.

We could start off with Mr. Quist.

• (1630)

**Mr. Dave Quist:** The universality is actually, I think, one of the key parts of the equation that you're trying to debate right now.

We would certainly agree that there's a need for child care. However, under this bill, the definition of universality seems to fit the nine-to-five type of role. As we know, that is not reality. There are people who are doing double shifts, who are working evening or night shifts and things like that, both men and women, whether they be single-parent families or whether they be both working outside of the household and so on. I don't see under this bill how that question is fully addressed and allows true universality.

On your second question regarding the cutting of funds, one of the things that come to mind with that is whether the federal government is in the business of child care and whether it is a federal or a provincial jurisdiction. I know that question has actually been up here within some of your debate. I don't have the answer to that question, but I think that is part of the answer to the issue you're discussing.

On the issue of money being transferred to the provinces, our preliminary research at this time indicates that if we go back the last number of years under different governments, there has been a great deal of money transferred from federal to provincial governments under the CHST and now the CST. I think accountability is one of the factors that needs to be drawn into there—is the money going where it was intended to go? That is really for you as government and opposition parties to finalize and debate that part of it, I believe.

**The Chair:** We're almost out of time.

**Ms. Yvonne Coupal:** On the question of universality, if only eight-to-fivers or nine-to-fivers take that bracket, in Quebec it means first come, first served. The parent who has one income, who has no alternative but to work, has to stay and wait on a waiting list, while the parents who may have one income with two parents can lopsidedly bring their child and drop them off. There are absolutely no selection criteria, because that would be discriminatory, and universality would no longer be the famous selling point.

So I have to admit that universality, even within the timeframe of a working nine-to-fiver, is also lopsided within the Quebec system. Please, don't take it out of context. Every parent who is trying to get a space based on universality is basically clawing at the same door. Unless there's some type of specification as to who gets a qualification, it won't matter whether it's 24-hour service; there are not enough people in the world to take care of our children.

•(1635)

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** I just wanted to give one quick example before my time is up. I have a constituent in my riding, Thomas LaBoss, who works a night shift. He has five kids. Three of them are under the age of six. I know how much this means to his family. He frequently shares with his wife the duties of staying at home.

What are you going to say to a family like that, which is barely making it—we're going to take that funding away? If that happened under this bill or happened under Mr. Dion's plan, it would be devastating for families like that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Brown.

Mr. Savage, you have five minutes, as we move into our second round.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming and giving us their presentations.

It is always a bit of a treat to follow Mr. Brown. It's a little bit like an afternoon at the improv, as he goes through some of his frightening tactics. I think he's been sitting too close to John Baird in the House of Commons.

To react to the comment he made the other day about the cut of \$25 billion in the transfers, unless they're planning to bring back Mr. Mulroney and build up a \$42 billion annual deficit, I don't see this as being imminent. I don't think even the Conservative government, under a minority Parliament, can be in power long enough to rack that up, but I hope you keep your eye on this and make sure it doesn't happen.

I'd like to ask a question about choice, because I think we all agree choice is the issue. I believe the plan the Liberal Party introduced provided choice. I believe this plan will provide more choice. You very clearly believe the opposite.

In my own province of Nova Scotia, among the people most excited about the Liberal plan that was introduced and signed in 2005 were parents of special needs kids and parents of francophone families, because they can't get child care spaces in Nova Scotia. As part of the deal that was signed with the Province of Nova Scotia, those spaces would have been created. That, to me, is choice that they otherwise don't have.

I wonder whether you have a view on that, anybody who wants to answer.

**Ms. Yvonne Coupal:** Can I answer that?

**The Chair:** We will go with Ms. Coupal.

**Ms. Yvonne Coupal:** The special care needs children in Quebec did have special services prior to the imposition of this day care—not child care—program. You call it “third party” child care. They were all of a sudden lumped in with an existing system that was there to serve all children. What ended up happening is that our special needs children were just about pushed to the side, because they were no longer segregated. The universality program basically wiped out the ability to award them special attention and special moneys. There

is a great falling back, a great hole in Quebec's day care system in meeting the needs of special children.

So one should be very cautious about assuming that just because a space will be open it will benefit a special need. That is not the case, and has not been, in Quebec. If anything, the opposite has proven true.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** Parents I've contacted who have special needs children are the ones pretty likely to stay home with the child. For example, there are people who have one parent at home and can't get any funding until they put the child into any institutional care for even a few hours a day, and that's when the funding comes.

They are actually sacrificing an entire income, and special needs parents should be funded for at-home care. It's like the case with those of you who believe in funding at-home care for hospital care. It's inconsistent to say we shouldn't give money to parents of special needs kids at home.

**The Chair:** Mr. Savage.

**Mr. Michael Savage:** I'm not a parent of special needs children. We have at least one member of the committee who would be able to speak to that much more effectively than I. But the parents I've talked to in my community have said that as part of the deal with the Province of Nova Scotia, it would have dramatically improved their opportunity to provide care for their children. I think that's very important.

As well, in the francophone community we have the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, who have a hard time. In fact, I believe the number of francophone children in Nova Scotia who, when they reach their French school, are not competent in their own language is over 60%. That's a shame, and if we believe we are a bilingual country and believe in bilingualism, we should provide those services. Under the previous plan, and I hope potentially under Bill C-303, we'd be better off.

Did somebody want to answer that?

•(1640)

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** I have one more thing.

**Ms. Helen Ward:** And then could I answer briefly?

**The Chair:** Okay, Ms. Smith, and then Ms. Ward, very quickly.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, parents have a right to raise their children in the language of their preference. The language of francophone children is dying because maybe they aren't spending enough time in their home environment, where the francophone language is used.

I mean, if we want to value our people of other languages, putting them into one style of day care is certainly not going to do that.

**The Chair:** Ms. Ward.

**Ms. Helen Ward:** The issue is not simply about choice, Mr. Savage, it's about choice with equality. We want equality for all the choices we make.

The vice-president of Kids First has a severely mentally handicapped son. She put him in licensed preschool briefly. He's very autistic, and he was very unhappy there. She took him out. Of course, she then got zero funding over the 20 years that she has provided basically home care for her son.

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Just to close off on that, francophone parents can't all stay at home. This goes back to the very issue of choice. They would probably prefer to have their children at home, but they have to work. And when they have to work, there are no spaces available in large parts of Nova Scotia—and, I suspect, in large parts of Canada.

The amount of \$100 a month is immaterial. It's irrelevant. It makes no difference to them. I would argue, although I know you wouldn't agree, that this is why we need some kind of framework that provides more choice for those families who have unique circumstances.

But thank you for—

**The Chair:** Just a quick comment, Ms. Ward.

**Ms. Helen Ward:** We would like to see the amount drastically increased. The Liberal plan, \$5 billion over five years, is for \$1 billion a year. There are two million children aged zero to five. That's \$500 per child per year.

The basis of that plan is that the vast majority look after their own kids and handle their own costs, but we subsidize the high cost of day care for the few who use it. It's grossly unfair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Ward, and thank you, Mr. Savage.

Madame Barbot, five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Some days it is difficult to sit here and hear what we hear about Quebec child care. I want to say very firmly that, in Quebec, we have a universal service that meets the needs of the majority of Quebec parents, and of which we are very proud. What is more, we want to keep it as it is.

You should know that this service was not built in a day. My oldest child is 35 now, and even before he had come into the world, we were already fighting to get child care. A number of battles had to be fought, men and women together, for us to get what we have today. The battle went on for a long time; a large number of people were involved and it arose from a very specific need: men and women with children who wanted to work and who wanted a service that was well set up, where children could receive an education, and where they were safe. It was a social choice.

A social choice means that the majority of people in a given place decided what was good for their children. If nine other provinces and the territories decide that they do not want child care service, more power to them. But in Quebec, we chose what we thought was good for us. And never, ever, will I accept your coming here and telling us that we have a discriminatory system. If you want to talk about discrimination, I can give you many more relevant examples than children.

By and large, we are educated and informed people. We love children, and so there is no way we would put them in a system that you are daring to call mediocre. When you say that, you insult everyone in Quebec. Now, that is nothing new, neither here nor elsewhere in Canada. But at least in the interest of being fair and equitable, you should be able to recognize what most people and most credible institutions in Canada and around the world would recognize, that in Quebec, we have just about the best system of child care there is. The system is so well regarded that some MPs are holding it up as a model and submitting it as such to the House.

Of course, in any model, adjustments have to be made here and there. It is a universal system — I am going to keep calling it universal —, but that does not mean that it works for 50% of the children, as someone here said; it means that it is accessible to everyone.

Of course there are problems with spaces. We are working on it. We would like to get to the point where all children have access. However, you will surely agree that a system like that is not put into place overnight. So it is universal in the sense that everyone has access and in the sense that the first come is the first served, precisely to prevent discrimination. People have access whether they are on welfare or whether they are lawyers or teachers. That is what universality is for us.

So if you want to look it up in a dictionary, go ahead. But coming up with your own definition to denigrate the system is not going to fly.

All I want to say here in that we have our system, we put it into place and it works for us. If you want to use it as a model, go ahead. If you do not want to use it as a model, do what you like. But we want to keep it, and we are going to do everything we can to keep it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1645)

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Is there any time left? I would like to add something.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, there is. You would like that? You have a minute and 15 seconds, Mr. Lessard.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Mr. Chair, maybe this is an occupational hazard — I would really like to know whom this gentleman is representing. He has passed around some material, and I am trying to find the answer to the question that he does not want to answer. One passage describes what they are advocating. Maybe it will put us on the scent. It says:

Marriage is an organic, pre-political institution that emerges spontaneously from society. People of the opposite sex are naturally attracted to each other, couple with each other, co-create children and raise those children. The little society of the family replenishes and sustains itself.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We're going to Ms. Chow for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** It's Beverley Smith. When you have a minute, I'd like to talk.

**The Chair:** Okay. We'll see if someone will ask you a question.

Go ahead, Ms. Chow.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** I actually want to come back to Sara, because she was about to answer the question. Imagine your neighbour, a single mother, back on welfare, as you said, maybe in Ontario. There's a national child benefit, unfortunately—

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** The national child benefit, the universal child care benefit?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** —and it's the one close to about \$3,400, from both the benefit and the supplement. Because there is provincial clawback on the single mom on welfare who gets very little—

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** For their child tax benefit, not the universal one, the \$100 a month thing.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** That's right, not the UCCB. If you add that with welfare, it's very low. Let's say if you have two children, as I was saying, with the new child benefit program, the \$310 only gives to parents who earn more than \$20,000, so obviously the single mom on welfare won't get that \$310 child tax benefit, the new one. Neither would she, because she's not working, get the worker's income credit, the new WITB—there it is, I keep remembering. She won't get that, either.

So she has a really terrible choice. She can stay home and live in poverty, and by the time she's finished paying rent, there might not be enough money for food for her kids, so she may end up relying on a food bank. We know that 40% of the people who use food banks are kids, in fact.

Let's say she's a nurse. She could go back to work, but she's at home right now, with her kids, on welfare.

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** She's at home right now. Her full choice is to be at home, on welfare, starving.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** There are two kids, let's say. She's a nurse. She can go and work, but who's going to take care of her two kids? So she's stuck in a cycle of poverty and living on welfare. She wants to go to work—

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** No, that's the other neighbour. We're talking about the welfare one.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** In that instance, Sara, what would she do? She'd probably have her kids in a long waiting list for child care and she may not get it.

• (1650)

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** Ms. Chow, when you first brought it up, you said there were two neighbours.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** So in those instances, what would she do?

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** You said there are two neighbours. You've somehow merged them both into one. We're talking about one who wants to go to work, who wants day care; the other side is on welfare, has decided that her work is at home with her kids. Yes,

maybe she was a nurse, maybe she wasn't. Maybe this side was a nurse, who knows?

Under this bill, the lady who wants to go to work and wants to go out and get paid for it, has an option under this bill. I'm thrilled for her; really, I am. Honestly, I am. Then you have a lady on welfare, with two kids, who does not have an option, except maybe to go to Ontario Early Years or other provinces', which I love—I used it myself, I don't want it to go away—to find a pamphlet that tells her how important milk is, but where is that milk coming from?

As you said, rent in Ontario is \$1,200 easily. There are two kids; let's throw them in a one-bedroom apartment for \$800 or \$900 a month. She's still at home. She's managing to do what she can, begging and borrowing and favours and everything, to keep her kids because she has an honest belief...and I have it myself. The only difference between her and me is our bank accounts. We are both good parents. Some parents suck, but it goes both ways. Some day care workers suck too. It's a natural instinct in that person. It has nothing to do with an overall image of day care or parents at home.

On this side you have the mom, on welfare too, ready to go to day care. I know you said \$10,000 before, but in Ontario Mary Anne Chambers said it's \$18,000 a year to create a day care space. With two kids, it's costing \$36,000 a year for her to go to day care—to put her two kids in day care, not her.

This side is getting \$11,000 plus. All that comes to \$15,000 or \$16,000 a year. I'm not saying give her the \$36,000, but don't you think bringing her up to a little above the poverty level might help her buy that milk, rather than running to—

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** Yes. But this bill is good for this, bad for that—

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** So in this case, would you actually support two things? One is to help that single mother on welfare who chooses to stay home—

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** Yes, out of my own pocket, happily.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** —and the second is to up the national child benefit so that, rather than \$3,400, she would get \$4,000, so there would be a bit more money on the child benefit side so she wouldn't have to worry about having to go to the food bank for food?

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** It's not the concept I would agree on, though.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Then on the nurse's side, there should be affordable child care for her. So it's a win-win situation for both.



**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** Yes, both private and at home, but—

**The Chair:** That's all the time we have.

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** Only two seconds, please.

**The Chair:** Ms. Smith wanted to get a comment in, and then we have to move to our next round. We are over time.

Ms. Smith, I know you have a comment, quickly.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** I find the tone of the debate is becoming very emotional and confrontational, and I don't think it's useful.

I feel that because I'm on video conference I'm actually being forgotten, which is another issue. I don't even know who's speaking because they haven't been identified. So that's a little technical thing.

But I think that there's so much hurting feelings going on at those tables right now, I'm very sad that we're not keeping to the real benefit, about what's good for children. It's really sad to watch. I think Ms. Chow, for example, is arguing as if she's the spokesperson for women's rights and we are actually talking about valuing unpaid labour, the third front.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We're going to finish the second round here.

Mr. Lake, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC):** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Yes, I think it's interesting to note the combativeness of the opposition parties. I think they're realizing the shortcomings of this bill. And it's interesting how combative they get when faced with parents who simply want a choice and want to be treated fairly under a system.

I noted that Ms. Dhalla talked about pitting stay-at-home moms versus working mothers. I would point out that that's exactly what this bill does. It pits one type of parent over another type of parent, one family against another, and it does so because it wouldn't treat them all fairly.

I would note that in our program right now we have \$5.6 billion allocated to families. It is three times as much as the Liberal Party had in theirs. The funny thing is that they don't argue with the numbers. What they seem to take issue with is the allocation of that money. In fact, I think one of the members, Mr. Savage, was quoted in the House of Commons as saying that the child care credit does nothing. I would think that some of you might take some issue with that.

They basically say there are some choices worthy of help and that some choices aren't worthy of help. I'd like to hear you comment on that. I think most of you would be in the category where your child care choice isn't worthy of financial help. Could you comment on that?

I'll start with Mr. Quist first, actually.

• (1655)

**Mr. Dave Quist:** Thank you very much.

Certainly our research has shown that the vast majority of parents would prefer to stay at home with their children to raise them. We

know that's not always feasible, though, so I want to throw something else onto the table for you to consider as a part of that, which many other countries have looked at, and that is some form of endorsed or stronger maternity/paternity program that allows parents in this situation you just spoke about, Ms. Chow, if I can speak directly with that, but also in other situations....

Many countries around the world have used that, combined with a form of family income splitting that allows the family taxation level to be even lower. That way, it allows that single-income parent, that dual family but single-income family, to reduce their level of income in order to meet that first choice, which is for one of the parents to be able to stay home to raise their children.

As qualified and as good as many child care workers can be, I believe the best child care worker is mom or dad.

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Go ahead, Ms. Smith.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** Many people are saying that some women can't afford to stay home and so they need day care. Ms. Chow likes that argument. I would like to welcome you to look at one past that: why can't they afford to stay home?

We have created a tax system that has made it so they can't afford to. One of the ways to remove family allowance is to remove the dependant child deduction; one is to not allow income splitting; one is to have the personal deduction so low compared to what it used to be; one is to have no more family wage; one is to have no pension benefits for the caregiving years; one is to have the child tax benefits that we have dependent on paid work outside the home; and not having universal maternity benefits.

Those are all policies that governments have put in place to prejudice being able to afford to be home. Surely as a government you could think of creative ways to make it affordable for a mother to be with her baby. What kind of society do we have where that option is not the protected option, that we're protecting the option to not be with your baby?

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Thank you, Ms. Smith.

I actually want to direct a point to Sara, if I could, because I'm limited in my time.

Sara, you have three kids, did you say? How old are they?

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** This week they are three, five, and eleven.

**Mr. Mike Lake:** So had you started having kids right now, under the new Conservative plan, and raised those kids past age six, you would collect, in total, \$21,600 over the course of that time period for three kids through from birth to age six.

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** I'll trust you on the math.

**Mr. Mike Lake:** So \$21,600, yet consistently all three of the other parties refer to that as nothing. Can you tell me, would \$21,600 over the years with your kids help you, or do you think it as nothing?

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** Oh God, I'm still at \$100 a month—actually, \$200 a month. This month I'm dropped down to \$100 a month. But hey, honestly, it's something I've argued all the time. That \$100 a month actually helped take care of the kids, not by paying schooling for me or anything like that. It was dog food, toys, games, ABCs, letters, all that. That, to me, is all child care.

As to the dogs, I live in the country. Do you all know what fishers are? They're nasty little buggers that can take down a full dog. They're like weasels.

**Mr. Mike Lake:** I want to interrupt just one more time, because I want to bring up one little scenario, and I want you to think about this scenario.

I want you to think of two neighbours, a single mother with a young child, say, two years old, and a couple with, let's say, two kids, two and four years old. The single mother works as a waitress because she wants to work. It's something she's done for a while. She works evenings as a waitress, and she really, really trusts the couple next door. So she pays the couple next door to watch her child in the evening while she goes and works as a waitress, and it actually helps the couple next door to balance out their own child care situation so that they can do what they think is best for their kids. Because they have this little extra income from watching the other child, they are able to have a parent stay home with their kids too. So you have what is definitely a win-win situation.

Under the Liberal plan, both of those families would actually subsidize other parents to send their kids to day care. Do you think that's right?

**A witness:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay, thank you very much.

We're now going to move to our third round. We have Mr. Russell. You have five minutes, sir.

• (1700)

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's good to be here. I'm the MP for Labrador. I must say, as a visitor, a fill-in this afternoon, it's one of the most energetic and animated discussions at a committee that I've seen in some time.

I would say the witnesses' views are very much in line with the Conservative Party of Canada. What the Conservative Party members espouse is obviously exactly what Ms. Smith would espouse, or Ms. Ward would espouse, or Mr. Quist would espouse.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** I do not agree. Excuse me, I'll speak for myself.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** That's my view and my impression, and I just wanted to share it with you.

**Ms. Helen Ward:** You're wrong. You're very wrong.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** You're in very, very, very close alignment with the views of the Conservative Party of Canada.

**The Chair:** Mr. Russell, the panels have been structured in a way that is for and against the bill. Definitely the individuals here today are against this bill, but there were those who were for it as well.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** I'm just making comments. I'm getting there.

By way of a question, Ms. Smith and Ms. Ward particularly, and Mr. Quist, what are legitimate forms of child care? You could give me a quick list—just you three.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** By legitimate, does that mean legal?

**Mr. Todd Russell:** No. What do you consider are legitimate forms, good-quality child care?

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** Well, you were using a legal word. You're talking about what I consider to be good forms, is that correct?

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Yes. Try that.

**The Chair:** Ms. Smith.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** Okay. I'll try that.

How were you raised? You seem to have turned out okay.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** “Seem” is the right word there.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** I was raised on the rocks of Labrador, my dear.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Todd Russell:** I'm asking the question, so could you answer it, please, in a respectful tone?

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** The criterion should be that the child feels loved and secure and that the caregiver is the same caregiver for a number of years so the child is anchored in emotional support.

I suspect everybody at that table has very little concept of what it's like to lack that support.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Okay.

Mr. Quist.

**Mr. Dave Quist:** Our research has shown that parents—

**Mr. Todd Russell:** I'm asking you.

**Mr. Dave Quist:** Well, I haven't come here to tell you my personal opinion but rather to bring you the research we've done on this particular issue. I think that's more relevant to your debate.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** So what does your organization, or the people you represent—

**Mr. Dave Quist:** Our organization has shown that for that good quality day care, the preferred people to raise your child, in descending order, would be mom or dad staying at home with their child; a family member; a local family you're familiar with, not necessarily kin but somebody you know, whom you trust, who loves your children; a non-profit child care situation; and then a for-profit child care situation. That's the order. But parents prefer to raise their children.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** The reasons are debatable, but you have child care as it's being proposed in this bill being one of those forms of legitimate child care that could offer those things that Ms. Smith said the child needs. So I appreciate that.

Hello, Ms. Ward.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** The problem is that your child care does not offer love.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Hello, Ms. Ward. Is Ms. Ward there?

**The Chair:** Okay. We had Mr. Quist. Who was the last person you wanted to hear from, Mr. Russell?

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Ms. Ward.

**Ms. Helen Ward:** Any form of child care that meets a child's developmental needs for attachment and attunement is okay, but it's parents who make these decisions. The state has no place in the child care decisions of the nation. That was the Liberal government's policy in 1999, and I hope they get back to it.

I've used mom care, dad care, grandmother care, uncle care, friend care, neighbour care, babysitter care—you name it. I lived underneath a day care for four and a half years, which was run by a close friend. I am entitled to a full fee subsidy. It would have been free, accessible, high quality, but I prefer my own care.

**The Chair:** Mr. Russell, another 45 seconds.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** I understand that two out of three of you agree that the child care of one form or another being contemplated in this bill is appropriate. I can't see how you would say that because this bill would increase child care spaces it somehow takes away choice. To me, it will add to the choices that people have.

I would leave it at that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we're going to Mr. Chong, for five minutes, please.

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to do two things. The first thing is to correct the record with respect to what was in place when we took power on February 6, 2006. The second thing I want to do is highlight the reason I oppose this bill; I think the issue speaks to a broader question about political community.

On the first issue, and that is regarding the facts, the original Liberal national child care plan was really a two-step process. The first step in the process was to execute 13 bilateral agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories. The second part of the plan was to actually execute 13 bilateral funding agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories.

When we took government on February 6, the case was that in terms of the first stage of the process, the agreements in principle, only 10 out of the 13 had been signed. The three territories had refused to sign the first stage in the plan because they were holding back on base funding, in addition to per capita funding. With regard to the second stage in the process, the process that would actually

trigger the funds that would flow, only three bilateral agreements had been signed; seven provinces and three territories had not signed funding agreements. The three provinces in question that had signed these bilateral funding agreements that allowed the money to flow were Manitoba, Quebec, and Ontario.

When we took power on February 6, we did three things. We triggered the one-year termination clauses in those three funding agreements with Manitoba, Quebec, and Ontario. We released the funds for the balance of the 2005-06 fiscal year, the \$1 billion in funds that had been allocated, and we committed to the provinces that in the fiscal year 2006-07 we would flow the \$1 billion to the ten provinces and three territories on an unrestricted basis. That was the case.

The reason I point that out is that even after all the effort on the part of the previous government, the national plan had not actually been fully executed. This serves to highlight the challenges of cross-jurisdictional programs and the problems in coming forward with a national program in this particular area.

The second point I wanted to make today had to do with national programs.

• (1705)

[Translation]

Regarding Outremont, for example, if this bill is passed and the act goes into effect, the member for Outremont will be able to vote for child care services in my riding of Wellington—Halton Hills in Ontario. But he could not vote for child care services in Outremont, because, under clause 4 of this bill, Quebec is not part of the national system.

[English]

One of the reasons I oppose this bill is what I call the Outremont question. It really is a situation where, because you're exempting Quebec from the provisions of this so-called national plan, you create a situation where the honourable member from Outremont can vote for the service levels and standards of this program in Wellington—Halton Hills—it affects the Canadian citizens of Wellington—Halton Hills—but she would not have the authority to vote for or have a say in the services and standards that would apply to Canadian citizens living in her own riding of Outremont.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lessard.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** I would just like to provide my colleague with a piece of information. It is very constructive.

There is a reason why it is like that: you do not pay for child care in Quebec, whereas Quebec pays for child care elsewhere in Canada. That is the reason.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Chong.

[Translation]

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

What I am saying is this. We are telling Canadian citizens living in nine of the ten provinces that the federal government will have a hand in the delivery of services, in the funding arrangements, and in the setting of standards, but what we are saying to those Canadian citizens resident in the province of Quebec is that the federal government will not have a hand in it. So you create this bizarre situation where members of Parliament in Quebec can determine the minimum standards for child care in all provinces except the province in which they are resident. One could call it the Outremont question.

I put that on the record, and I think it is an important thing, because if we are to be a political community of some 32 million people in the northern half of this continent, we have to take collective approaches to these kinds of issues.

• (1710)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Chong.

That finishes our third round.

Ms. Dhalla, would you like a couple of minutes? Then we have Mr. Lake for a couple of minutes, and then we will wrap it up.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for being so kind.

I wanted to touch upon a couple of things. The discussion at some points has been heated, but we obviously have substantially different viewpoints on this side versus our friends on the other. But I think that ultimately it is important that we talk about what we think is the best approach to ensure that our children, who are our future, get the very best.

I do want to comment before I ask my particular question. If I'm not mistaken, Ms. Smith stated in her earlier comment, when my colleague asked about what type of child care was appropriate, that children in day care do not receive love. Since 54% of children are in some form of non-parental care, that is an absolute insult to those young children and those parents who have invested time and energy in putting their children in quality spaces and work with child care educators who, on a daily basis, try to provide the very best for those children. I think those children are receiving love and they are receiving care, because for many parents across the country, that is their only choice.

I did want to bring up a question that Sara commented on and also mentioned in her report. You had stated—and I know this was disputed—that according to Statistics Canada, 54% of children are in some form of non-parental child care.

Sara, how much do you think it costs for a day care space across the country?

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** It's different in every province.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** How much would you say the average is?

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** I don't know. I'm not a statistician. In Ontario it's \$18,000-plus.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** You mentioned in your report it was about \$18,000.

**Mrs. Sara Landriault:** That is in Ontario. Mary Anne Chambers stated that, actually. That's not my number.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Would Ms. Smith or Ms. Ward have any type of figures?

**Ms. Helen Ward:** Yes, I do. The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, as reported in the *Toronto Star*, said that building a day care space of quality costs up to \$40,000 in a city like Vancouver. Operating a day care space in Toronto is about \$18,000. That's affirmed by statistics from Sweden and the RAND Corporation in the U.S., and in statistics from B.C.

Day care requires capital cost, operating cost, training cost, and massive bureaucratic infrastructure, so the overall cost of one day care space for an infant would be at least \$25,000.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** So it's costing about \$25,000, let's say \$2,000 a month. And the Conservatives have tried in their own particular respect to provide some sort of choice, and they have provided a taxable deduction of almost \$100 a month, which parents have very quickly realized, once they have done their taxes, is about \$60 a month, and when you do the math on that, it is about \$2 a day. Would you all agree, regardless of what your particular opinion is of how parents should be providing choice and what type of child care they should be providing, that \$2 a day is certainly not enough for investing in child care?

**Ms. Helen Ward:** We definitely agree that it's not enough, but your plan gives absolutely nothing, and \$100 a month is a small step in the right direction. It should be far more. If it's \$25,000 a year, so be it—for every child.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** I want to remind you that when the Liberals were in government, we were the party that implemented the child tax benefit, the national child benefit supplement, and ensured that we also had a child care expenses deduction. And I think the early learning child care plan by the Liberal Party was a step in the right direction, to create much-needed spaces for the 54% of parents in this country who have to or want to put their children in some sort of child care.

• (1715)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** I'm Beverley Smith. I have an answer.

**The Chair:** Just a very quick response, Ms. Smith, and then we're going to move to Mr. Lake as the final questioner.

Go ahead, Ms. Smith.

**Ms. Beverley Smith:** My comment is to clarify about love. You cannot standardize love. You cannot guarantee love. That's what I meant.

I also think that we should not reduce our arguments again to emotionalism. You hurt my feelings.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lake, for four minutes.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** I was commenting on your statement.

**Mr. Mike Lake:** I note again that as Ms. Dhalla talks about UCCB and in terms of her conversation about how much parents get, the only people she is consulting and the only people she talks about are those who use institutional day care, and those people say that it's not enough to cover the cost of day care. But you notice that the conversation never revolves around asking people who don't use institutional day care whether \$100 per month is enough. A large number of those people say that it is very helpful to them, that it does go a long way to helping them out. Sara did say that it does actually go a long way to helping her out, I believe.

To me, that only highlights the problem, because the Liberals' plan gave money to a specific small subset of people and it allocated a smaller amount of money among those people, and our plan treats everybody fairly. I'm not sure I understand where the confusion lies. Our plan treats all parents equally. That's enough said about that.

One thing about this bill is that I do read this as providing a one-size-fits-all model for Canadian families and I don't see it offering parents a wide range of options and supports. Is there anybody on the group today who sees it any differently?

**Ms. Yvonne Coupal:** I don't know if I see it differently or not, but being ten years ahead of everything going on in this room right now, I feel like a lot of déjà vu is taking place.

I must say that the fact that Quebec's existing situation is being relatively overlooked I find troubling, to say the least. I would say that last March 26 a large percentage of Quebecers took their feet, went to the polls, and voted for the party—and I'm not promoting that party in any way, shape, or form—that gave families choice. They went toward the party that gave families choice.

I can only say that ten years down the road the honourable members sitting around this table who are making these decisions today may somehow or other wish they had started the organigram with the family first and then all forms of third party care on the next level of the organigram, you see. It's called family, children first, and then after that we decide—child care, grandma care, neighbour care, home-based day care.

So please remember the organigram, gentlemen and ladies, too. It's very important.

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Okay. I want to take a second to—

**Ms. Helen Ward:** I would like to—

**The Chair:** Ms. Ward, we'll get to you in one second.

Go ahead, Mr. Lake.

**Mr. Mike Lake:** The other point I want to make is regarding the \$250 million to the provinces for the creation of child care spots, because in my riding of Edmonton—Millwoods—Beaumont, like any labour situation in Alberta, we are short of child care workers and we do need to create spaces there. That's why it's so important to get that money to the provinces.

That said, nobody knows better the situation in Alberta than the Alberta provincial government in terms of the challenges faced there, and no one is positioned better to make the decisions and to be accountable to their voters than is the Alberta government. I just want to make that point.

I'd like to make a motion too. Is my time pretty close to up, or do I have time for one more?

**The Chair:** Your time is up.

I want to hear from Ms. Ward very quickly.

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Then I'll make the motion afterwards. Okay.

**Ms. Helen Ward:** I would like to correct the record. Under the Conservatives, we don't treat all families equally. Those who use day-care-centre-based care are still far more subsidized than any other form of care. That's a very big concern. The \$100 a month is a small step in the right direction, but we're still grossly over-subsidizing one form of care.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I will get to that motion. I do want to thank the witnesses for being here today.

We want to thank the people via video conference who weren't able to make it in. It was great to have your input. And to the ladies and gentlemen at the table, thank you very much for your time today.

Mr. Lake.

**Mr. Mike Lake:** I would like to move that before our study is over we invite the members of the child care branch of the human resources department as witnesses here.

• (1720)

**The Chair:** That's fine. He would like to invite the department to come here before we're done.

We're in committee business, so we can discuss this. The question is whether there's any discussion about that now or whether you're asking for a vote on that at a later point in time.

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Do I have unanimous consent to move the motion? No?

**The Chair:** There's not an interest on behalf of the rest of the MPs to have the department in?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Who's coming on the tenth?

**The Chair:** That's just counsel, to go clause-by-clause. They're not there for questions; they're there to make sure that motions and amendments are in order.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** So they will be here?

**The Chair:** No. It will be the drafters of the bill. They would help drafting the bill.

Would it be a possibility to have them there that day, or on their own? What are you asking for, Mr. Lake?

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Sorry. I have a question.

**The Chair:** Go ahead. We'll take names.

Ms. Dhalla.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Where would we propose to fit this in, because we had agreed amongst all of the vice-chairs and you, as chair, that we had set out a schedule of when we would hear from witnesses.

**The Chair:** That's the schedule, unless you guys are prepared to change it.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** I think we should just keep the schedule.

**The Chair:** Okay. I don't have unanimous consent for that.

Mr. Lake.

**Mr. Mike Lake:** I would point out that this was something that Mr. Savage actually also agreed with when we talked about it. It seems ridiculous that we have not heard from the department. We haven't heard from the officials within the department who deal with child care. I think that it has to be a priority. Ms. Dhalla is on the steering committee. I would think that should have come up by now.

**The Chair:** The question is, we could have a vote on this right now, or do you want to defer it until Tuesday to talk about it?

Ms. Dhalla.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** I would just like to get on the record that we had agreed that someone from Human Resources and Social Development would come to the committee. I think we were all under that impression, because we left it in the good hands of the

chair and the clerk, I believe, to ensure that we would have someone who is dealing with this bill. We were not advised at any point in time that we would have legal counsel, who would be very restricted in the type of questions that they could answer.

I would propose that we take a look at it with all the vice-chairs and have a subcommittee meeting and come back to the committee.

**The Chair:** Okay.

The proposal is, Mr. Lake, that we could meet as a subcommittee to discuss whether or not we adjust the schedule. I will talk to the clerk, Graeme here, and maybe we could set something up. Monday is probably not going to be a good day for people coming back. Would Tuesday morning be okay, as a possibility—the early morning?

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Could we meet just before the committee meets?

**The Chair:** That's a possibility as well.

I will have the clerk, tomorrow, talk to the subcommittee members to set up a time before the next meeting, okay?

Thank you very much once again.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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