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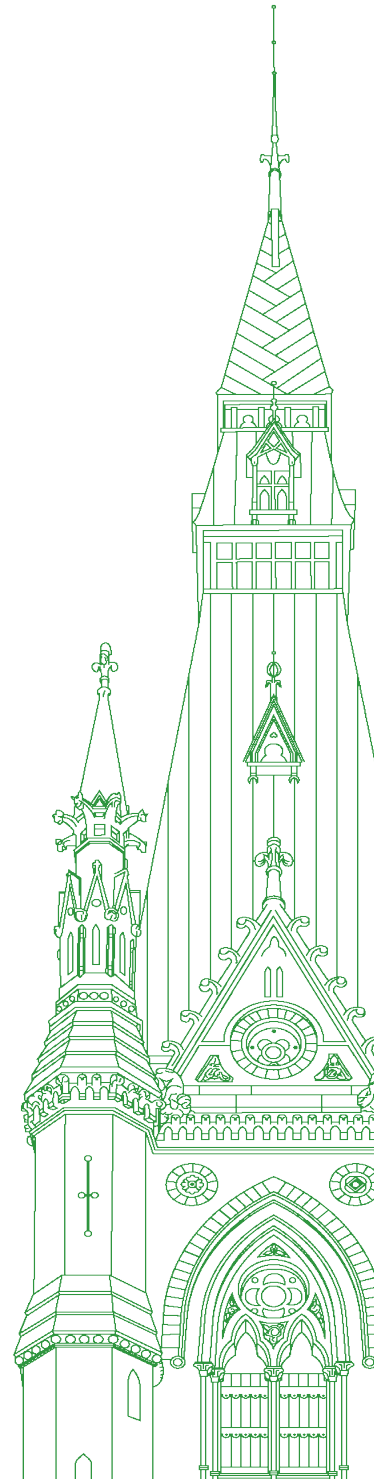
# Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 058**

Friday, March 10, 2023

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Chair: Mr. Robert Morrissey



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

Friday, March 10, 2023

• (0845)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order. The clerk has advised me that we are good to go.

Welcome to meeting number 58 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, with some appearing remotely by Zoom and some attending in person in the room.

To ensure an orderly meeting, please direct all your questions or interventions through me, the chair, and wait until I recognize you by name. You have the choice of speaking in either official language of your choice. For those appearing remotely, there is translation on your Surface device. For those in the room, there is translation using the headphones. If there is an interruption in translation services, please get my attention; we'll suspend while it is worked out.

I would like to remind members that no screenshots or in-room shots are allowed while the committee is in hearings.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Friday, February 3, 2023, the committee will continue its study of Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

I don't think technical tests to check the connectivity of witnesses have been completed yet. I would like to inform all members that witnesses appearing virtually today and members participating remotely are required to use a headset approved by the House of Commons. If they do not, they will not participate verbally in the meeting, but members will still have the right to vote in the meeting.

I would like to welcome our witnesses. We have Minister Gould, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. Welcome back again. You are a regular before this committee, Minister.

From the Department of Employment and Social Development, we have Michelle Lattimore, director general, federal secretariat; Cheri Reddin, director general, indigenous early learning; Jill Henry, director, policy, indigenous early learning; Kelly Nares, director, federal secretariat; and Christian Paradis, director, federal secretariat on early learning and child care.

Minister, the floor is yours for five minutes.

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development):** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair and committee, for having me to speak to Bill C-35. As you mentioned, I've been here quite frequently recently, and it's always good to be back and spend time with my colleagues.

[Translation]

I am pleased to be accompanied today by the Director General of the Federal Secretariat on Early Learning and Child Care, Michelle Lattimore, the Director General of the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat, Cheri Reddin, as well as Directors Jill Henry, Kelly Nares and Christian Paradis.

[English]

Working with provinces, territories and indigenous partners, the Government of Canada is transforming the way child care is delivered.

As has been said many times, child care is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Parents should have the opportunity to build both a family and a career, and children deserve the best possible start in life.

[Translation]

As part of Budget 2021, the Government of Canada made a transformative investment to help give them that start—up to \$30 billion over five years to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system.

Since that announcement, we have signed agreements with each province and territory to reduce fees everywhere outside of Quebec, support the creation of high-quality child care spaces, and ensure early childhood educators are better supported.

[English]

The Canada-wide system is already benefiting tens of thousands of families. Fees for regulated child care have been reduced in all jurisdictions outside of Quebec and the Yukon, which already had affordable child care systems. This system is a critical step toward our goal to see on average \$10-a-day child care across Canada by March 2026.

[Translation]

To ensure the success of the system, we are also working hard with provinces and territories to create 250,000 new full-time regulated and primarily not-for-profit child care spaces by the end of March 2026, as well as to attract, train and retain the best early childhood educators.

We have put Bill C-35 before the House to ensure future generations of families across Canada can continue benefitting from this system.

● (0850)

[English]

The proposed legislation reinforces the government's commitment to support provinces, territories and indigenous partners in building a Canada-wide system. It will ensure that federal funding will be sustained; it promises accountability; and it further underscores our commitment to human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

Bill C-35 is the result of comprehensive feedback from our partners and stakeholders. It is driven by shared interests, close partnerships and collaboration.

This proposed legislation respects provincial and territorial jurisdiction, and the vision and principles of both the 2017 multilateral early learning and child care framework that was developed with provinces and territories and the indigenous early learning and child care framework that was co-developed with indigenous partners.

[Translation]

With Bill C-35, provinces, territories, and Indigenous partners would benefit from the assurance of a sustained federal commitment to early learning and child care.

By enshrining our shared principles and vision into federal law, we would be building stability and predictability into the child care system.

[English]

Mr. Chair, our child care system is working everywhere in Canada, and more and more families are benefiting. This bill has been conceived to ensure that if it is passed as written, families will continue to benefit from these investments for generations to come.

Now we are pleased to answer your questions.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Minister.

We will now open the floor to questions, beginning with Madam Ferreri for six minutes.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here. We know how important child care is for parents across this country, and in particular we know how important access to child care is for all families.

We heard from Michelle Lattimore this past week that the “framework sets the foundation for a shared long-term vision for early learning in child care, guided by the agreed-upon principles of quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility and inclusivity.”

However, when I asked Ms. Lattimore about the wait-lists in Canada, there had been no data collected to know that number. It is odd to have a framework to solve a problem without knowing the numbers to start with.

Also, when MP Falk asked about consultation, Ms. Lattimore said that they “were seeking a response on the legislation and the discussion guide outlining what [they] expected to see in the legislation.” She said, “Specific responses on challenges that are being faced by rural or remote families in accessing child care have not been specifically addressed”.

The report does not break down what we heard from the perspective of not-for-profit or for-profit providers. Minister, if the federal government has no purview under the licencing and agrees that there is a place for all forms of child care, that is up to the individual provinces to decide. Why is there a specific call-out in the guiding principles, yet there's the contradiction that you're only primarily focusing on not-for-profit and public providers? If the goal is quality, accessibility, flexibility and inclusivity, why leave out a sector in the vision of child care that provides care for so many kids across the country?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Thank you, Ms. Ferreri.

I think it's important to clarify that so long as they're a licensed provider, they're included in the child care agreement signed with provinces and territories. It doesn't distinguish between existing for-profit and not-for-profit providers. In fact, the not-for-profit umbrella includes home care, which could be private or not-for-profit, so in fact no one is actually left out in this system.

When it comes to wait-lists, most provinces and territories don't have a good understanding. Part of the challenge is that it has been an ad hoc system for so long. You put your name on multiple wait-lists and see where you're going to be able to get a spot. I did this myself, as a parent. I've heard from countless people across the country who have done the same thing. Day cares and centres say they don't have a good, accurate sense, because they might have 60 or 100 families on their wait-list, but half of those could be on other wait-lists as well.

We know that there is a demand and there is a need in urban, rural and remote communities. All of that is contemplated within the multilateral frameworks.

In fact, I was in Saskatchewan just on Monday. Since signing the agreement, the Government of Saskatchewan has announced 4,000 new spaces, many of which are in rural and remote communities.

• (0855)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you for that, Minister.

I appreciate what you're saying, but it's just not adding up. If the focus is for all, why wouldn't you have that in the language of the bill? Why do you say "primarily" not-for-profit and public? Why not just say "all" child care? Why is that language so exclusive?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** I think you're going to be hearing from Pierre Fortin after me, who has done exceptional research on child care, particularly in Quebec and in the CPE, the Centres de la petite enfance. He has some pretty extraordinary research that demonstrates just how significant the quality gap is with regard to for-profit and not-for-profit providers.

We also recognize that, as this is being funded through public dollars, we want to ensure that any investment that we're making is going directly back into the provision of child care. There is considerable research that demonstrates that there is higher quality, usually, within the not-for-profit system. It doesn't mean there aren't excellent for-profit providers, and that's why we've grandfathered all existing licensed spaces into the agreement.

Of course, it's an opt-in decision within each province or territory, but we've seen incredible take-up across the country—between 95% and 98%, depending on the province or territory—of all licensed providers, irrespective of the type of child care that they are providing.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you, Minister.

You said in your opening remarks that access to child care is a necessity and you said families have the right to build a family.

What I would ask you, in listening to hundreds, or thousands actually, because there are Facebook groups of thousands of families who can't access child care right now.... One woman who wrote to me has been on a wait-list since she was seven weeks pregnant. Her child is now 14 months old, and she says there is no mother's right to access. She has given up on having any more children.

Given your words in your opening remarks saying that parents should have the right to build a family, what do you say to people like Leanne who say that this agreement does not give parents choice? She says it gives all the control to the operators and she has chosen not to build a family because of this agreement.

**Hon. Karina Gould:** I would say that's exactly why these agreements are in place. Until we had these agreements, there often wasn't a choice because it was either too expensive or there wasn't a space available.

As I said in my last answer to you, we know that space creation is really important. It's why we've contemplated building 250,000 additional spaces across the country. It's so we can make sure that people like Leanne and families who want to have children but maybe can't because of affordability or because they don't have access to reliable child care are going to have that.

This agreement changes the nature of how child care is delivered in this country in a way that is going to have transformational impacts on families, on women and on the economy.

We don't have to look far. We can look at the experience of Quebec, which, 25 years ago, brought in universal, affordable, available child care.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Do you know the current wait-list in Quebec to access child care?

**The Chair:** Ms. Ferreri, your time has gone over.

We'll have Mr. Coteau for six minutes.

**Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here.

I know that for decades governments, provincially and federally, have been looking for ways to strengthen child care, and many Canadians have aspired to the dream of a universal child care program. To me, the fact that we're here at this point is just incredible. I know that in my community of Don Valley East and throughout the Don Mills corridor, this is a very popular program. I'm happy that we're at this stage.

Can you talk about the economic benefits of such a program, not just to families but also to people who are involved in the sector and work in the sector?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** I can, with pleasure.

Child care is one of those amazing policies that is smart social and economic policy. In fact, if you look at the Quebec experience, they have received more in increased revenue from income taxes than they spend on the program, so the return on investment for the broader society is astonishing.

Part of that is because parents with young children, predominantly women, can stay in or re-enter the workforce. Quebec has one of the highest rates of women with children under the age of four who are working. That has long-term impacts and financial benefits, both to the woman—who has financial autonomy and sovereignty over her finances and doesn't have that gap of a number of years when she's not earning, if that's her choice—as well to the family, because there can be greater income at a time when they're spending the most when they have a small child.

For every dollar invested in child care, we see a \$1.50 to \$2.80 return to the broader economy. The estimates are that when this child care program is fully implemented within the next three or four years, we're going to see billions of dollars returned to the economy, and I think it's a 2% increase to GDP.

It's huge. This is such a smart investment we can be making, because it has such positive benefits, not just economically but also socially.

● (0900)

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I know the bill calls for the creation of the national advisory council. It says that there would be between 10 to 18 members within that council and that it would strive to find some diversity and balance.

Can you talk a bit about how you're going to approach this? What's in the works so far, and when can we expect that council to be in full operation?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** The council is in full operation. It was announced in November. We have members from all across Canada in every province and almost every territory, and a range of perspectives from academia and researchers, providers, educators and parents.

We have also tried to make sure that there is diversity regionally and in their backgrounds. There are parents with children with special needs and official language minority communities to get a good perspective from across the country. Of course, when you have 12 to 18 members on a council, you can't have every single voice represented, but I think we have done a fairly good job of making sure we have that diversity.

I have had the occasion to meet with them twice, and I have to say that it's a pretty phenomenal group of individuals who care passionately about making child care successful in this country.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I know that a significant part of the investment is going to indigenous communities. I think it's just under \$2 billion over five years, if memory serves me correctly.

One of the goals of Bill C-35 is to put in place a long-term strategy for funding. Can you explain how the mechanics of that would work? If the bill does go forward and Bill C-35 is in full operation, how would you envision that long-term funding being structured?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Bill C-35 is complementary to the multilateral framework and the bilateral agreements we have through the Canada-wide early learning and child care initiative. We have signed 13 bilateral agreements with provinces and territories. The one with Quebec is asymmetrical, because Quebec is much further

ahead in this regard than the rest of the country. In fact, they are the pioneers in Canada.

The funding arrangements, then, are complementary. We have signed these agreements on five-year terms so that we can make sure that we are setting out objectives, and provinces and territories can respond with action plans determining and illustrating how they are going to spend that money. Then Bill C-35 commits the federal government to being a long-term funding partner.

I don't think it's appropriate for Bill C-35 to determine what the amount of money is, because I think we need to continue to have this as an evergreen process. I think what's really important is that it says that the federal government is committed to funding child care and that we are going to be there for the long term.

This is in addition to the budget 2021 decision that provided on-going funding beyond the five-year agreements of up to \$9 billion a year in perpetuity.

● (0905)

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Thank you so much.

Thank you, Chair.

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Bérubé, the floor is yours for six minutes.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to welcome the Minister and the witnesses who are here with us.

Minister, we can agree that Bill C-303, which was introduced by the NDP in 2006, is the ancestor of Bill C-35, with a few differences. However, one of those differences concerns me: Bill C-35 makes no mention of an exemption for Quebec, although we are well aware that Quebec is a forerunner and a leader in the area of early childhood and daycares, as you yourself have said.

It has now been over 25 years since the Government of Quebec adopted a family policy that led to the creation of a network of affordable early childhood education services that help to create better living conditions and a better balance between parenting and work responsibilities for millions of families. Given that fact, do you believe it would be useful to include a clause in Bill C-35 to permit Quebec to withdraw from this program, unconditionally and with full compensation, to avoid negotiations and arguments between the federal and provincial governments every five years?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Thank you, Ms. Bérubé. I would also like to welcome you to the committee.

This is not something we have heard from the Government of Quebec. There were no arguments during negotiation of the agreement, and I don't think there will be in the future. We have an excellent relationship with the Government of Quebec when it comes to this agreement, which, as you know, is asymmetrical. What the government of Quebec and the provincial and territorial governments like about this bill is that it focuses on the role of the federal government and does not infringe on areas under the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories. That is important to note. We cannot legislate in their fields.

The provision that is most important for the provinces and territories is the one that provides that the federal government is committed to maintaining long-term funding for early learning and child care programs and services.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** What is there in this bill that would avoid another conflict between Quebec and Ottawa when the current agreement expires?

As well, why was clause 4 of Bill C-303, which provided an exemption for Quebec, not retained and incorporated into Bill C-35?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** As I mentioned, Bill C-35 focuses on the work of the federal government and guarantees its long-term financial commitment for child care, a commitment that did not exist before Budget 2021. Before this, we had agreements with the provinces and territories. For example, in 2017, my colleague, Health Minister Duclos, negotiated a framework with all of the provinces and territories on this subject. In the case of the current bill, however, we are focusing on the work of the federal government.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** At the last meeting, the officials stated that this bill mainly dealt with the federal framework and it was therefore not necessary to include Quebec's right to withdraw from the program with full compensation.

Quebec's current agreement is for five years. What guarantee does Quebec have that in the next round of negotiations, the federal government will not impose standards and obligations?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** The purpose of Bill C-35 is to guide the federal government so that subsequent governments, whether or not they are Liberal, as I hope they will be, are guided by these principles and objectives when they negotiate with the provinces and territories.

Of course, Quebec is already a leader when it comes to these principles and objectives, as you say. Ultimately, what we want to do is improve child care services in the rest of Canada so they are at the same level as the services in Quebec. Quebec has also committed to creating 30,000 new child care spaces under the agreement and we are going to maintain a very positive relationship with Quebec.

As well, I have to say that at the federal-provincial meetings, it was very helpful to have access to Quebec's experience, through my former counterpart, who was very generous in this regard, in fact. This enabled the provinces and territories to learn about Quebec's experience.

• (0910)

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Quebec is a leader in relation to child care services because children are the priority. Given that fact, is the compensation you are going to give Quebec under Bill C-35 going to be generous?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Yes. It is determined by a formula based on the number of children under the age of 12. That is how we have divided the funding for each province and territory, and it is the same thing for Quebec.

Of course, Quebec took the initiative 25 years ago, when the federal government did not yet have a role in this field, and we have based a number of our objectives and principles on Quebec's experience for working with the other provinces and territories.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Bérubé.

[English]

We'll go to Madame Gazan for six minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

It's nice to see you, Minister.

I know the Department of Justice is working on a co-developed process for free, prior and informed consent and that Bill C-35 includes a commitment to furthering UNDRIP. This was indicated by Madame Reddin in the last meeting, but we know this response isn't adequate, because we know there cannot be one single definition for "free, prior and informed consent". Rather, as it is law, in fact, that circumstances determine how it's applied. This would also be true for Bill C-35.

Therefore, will the minister acknowledge this and take appropriate measures to enshrine the right of indigenous peoples to make decisions in matters impacting our own children?

I share this because it's the very foundation of reconciliation, especially in light of the findings of the TRC, which were based on the testimony of residential school survivors who were robbed from their families. This government has been stalling on enshrining FPIC—free, prior and informed consent. We're coming up to the two-year mark; you have a month and a half left. This is part of the law. You had two years to develop a plan, and there's nothing on the table yet. This isn't acceptable. We have an opportunity here to do the right thing.

Again I'm wondering, Minister, if you'll acknowledge this and take appropriate measures to enshrine FPIC and ensure the rights of indigenous peoples to have full free, prior and informed consent over matters impacting our children.

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Thank you, Ms. Gazan, for being here and for your intervention.

We certainly share the same objective. I think it's very important to see Bill C-35 as a tool complementary to the co-developed framework on indigenous early learning and child care.

One thing we have been very careful not to do is have Bill C-35 go beyond the bounds of the co-developed framework that we did with indigenous early learning and child care, which was announced in 2018 and endorsed by the AFN, ITK and MNC at the time.

I've noted one thing very clearly in the travels I've done in the past year around the country. I made a specific note while visiting with indigenous communities and leaders advancing IELCC: This is distinctions-based, indigenous-led and culturally relevant, and it incorporates language learning as well. It's very much indigenous-led and something that is.... We are a funding partner. We co-developed this, but we need to see this as a partnership—

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I think that's all positive, going back to Bill C-15, but all future legislation is supposed to be in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, so I would push back on that.

I will move on to wages and working conditions.

I think everybody knows I was formerly an early childhood educator. I'm very proud. We know the average wage for an early childhood educator is \$19.50 an hour. That's not a liveable wage in most places.

Unions representing child care workers support adding an explicit, clear commitment to decent work to Bill C-35. We know that in order to make this work, we need a robust workforce. We also know that research, in study after study, indicates that poor pay and working conditions are deterrents to joining the sector. That's exactly why I left my job as an ECE. I didn't want to live on the no-salary we were provided for the important work we do.

Is your government resistant to adding language that establishes liveable wages and fairer working conditions as guiding principles for federal funding? I say this because your party, in a platform in 2021, came out and vowed to push for a \$25 minimum wage for personal support workers. I support that. Care work is critical work.

Are you willing to support the same sort of liveable wage for early childhood educators?

• (0915)

**Hon. Karina Gould:** I absolutely support a liveable wage for early childhood educators, and I have been in a lot of discussions with provincial and territorial counterparts on this issue.

This legislation, as I mentioned, is about the federal role. Wages are the purview, when it comes to child care, of provinces and territories; however, the multilateral frameworks and the legislation highlight quality. Obviously we can't have quality if we don't have a talented, caring, well-compensated workforce. Each of the agreements requires that provinces and territories put forward plans to recruit and retain ECEs.

We've seen over the past year many provinces and territories put wage top-ups in place. Often they're not as much as is needed, but I can say that for all of my provincial and territorial counterparts, this is the number one thing they are working on this year. For the national advisory council, that's the first piece of work they're doing as well.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** To push back, you did do that for personal care workers federally. Anyway, I'm just pushing back.

**The Chair:** Ms. Gazan, please ask a short question.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** We know that study after study has found that public not-for-profit care delivers high-quality services. In the bilateral agreement with Alberta that you created, you committed to 42,500 not-for-profit care spaces. I support that, but then in January 31, 2023, you funded 22,500 for-profit spaces instead.

Why did your government, after tabling a bill that put not-for-profit public care spaces at a priority, not instead fund 22,500 not-for-profit and public spaces?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** They are cumulative. Alberta is still required to create 42,500 not-for-profit spaces, of which they've created about 7,000 so far. The 22,500 in the private sector was something that was held back until Alberta came forward with a cost control framework, because we wanted to ensure that any public funding that was going to for-profit providers was going to be well spent and well managed. They are public dollars at the end of the day. This is similar to New Brunswick and P.E.I., which have very robust public oversight and don't necessarily distinguish between not-for-profit and for-profit providers.

In order for Alberta to pursue that, they had to provide a similar kind of assurance to the federal government.

**The Chair:** Madame Gray, you have five minutes.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

Minister, you've referenced building 250,000 new spaces. How many new child care workers will be required to accommodate this?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** We will need about 40,000.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** StatsCan reports that the greatest percentage of children in child care are younger than school age. If we use the average of six children per child care worker, as fewer are needed for infants and more for school-aged children, that would mean 41,000 new child care workers, as you have said.



If we continue doing that math, if we look at all of these spaces and look at an average child care facility of about 75 children, which is quite large, that would mean 3,338 new child care facilities would have to be constructed in order to accommodate these 250,000 new children in the system, and that's within three years. The document that we had from your department said it's within three years. What is the plan to open more than 3,000 child care facilities with very large numbers of 75 children per facility over the next three years?

• (0920)

**Hon. Karina Gould:** On our website, each province and territory has submitted an action plan. It's all public information that details their plans for opening new spaces. About 50,000 have been opened or announced in the last year, which I think puts us in a good position. Remember, that's in the first year of this program. We look to ramp up, so provinces and territories are working hard on this, and they're doing a great job. They have plans to make sure that they are getting to areas where child care is underserved.

This is fresh in my mind, because I was in Regina on Monday. The YMCA there partnered with a co-op and the Government of Saskatchewan, and they have increased from 80 to 170 spaces in the past couple of months. They got a new space. There is lots of really great work happening around the country.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** A lot of that information is more on the not-for-profit side and doesn't include for-profit spaces. When we look at reports that have been done by Statistics Canada, we see that the locations number about a third of the for-profit locations, which are quite often in-home locations that are very small.

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Those are included in the not-for-profit category.

If you're a home day care, we've included you in the not-for-profit category. There's lots of opportunity to expand in home day cares as well.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** When we also look at the workers who are needed for that, reports are showing that within the next 10 years, we will need replacement workers for over 60% of workers. When we look at the labour force of that many new workers, which you said was around 40,000, and add the number of replacement workers over the next 10 years, we see that about 181,000 workers will have to be replaced. Once you add the two of them up, you're looking at well over 200,000 workers.

What's the plan for that?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** We're up for the challenge.

This is a nation-building endeavour. This is a really exciting thing that's happening across the country. Provinces and territories are increasing seats at colleges for ECEs. The College of the North Atlantic, for example, in Newfoundland, and Sask Polytechnic in Saskatchewan are putting together strategies. Again, all this information is public on the Government of Canada's website. Everyone can look up the action plans and can look up the bilateral agreements.

They have to put in place retention plans as well. Manitoba has done a great job in terms of putting forward a benefits and pension plan. They have more work to do, but they're working on it. B.C.

has done some really great work in a new program for high school students so that they can graduate as an accredited ECE and not have to go to college. There are lots of really interesting and innovative things happening around the country.

Whether it's a national advisory council on early learning and child care or the upcoming FPT meeting, the workforce is going to be the main topic that we will be discussing, because it's fundamental to making the system a success.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** For a lot of those strategies and the timelines that we're looking at, what happens if those timelines aren't met?

You're looking at a three-year timeline to build thousands of new facilities. Of course, we know even getting a building permit in a lot of municipalities can sometimes take many months or many years. You're looking at having people go through the programs.

Do the numbers really add up? Do the numbers really match up?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Yes. Yes, they do. We're going, right?

I have to say that regardless of political stripe at provincial and territorial levels, everyone is committed and engaged in this endeavour. They are excited about it and they are working hard.

There are great public servants across this country who are thinking about these challenges. Then there are amazing child care providers and ECEs who are just so excited about this and thinking about how they can expand their services. I have to say that it's ambitious, yes, and it's a challenge, absolutely, but there are a lot of folks who are really engaged in making it a reality.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Gray.

Go ahead, Mr. Long, for five minutes.

• (0925)

**Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair. Good morning to my colleagues and the minister and everybody else. Thank you for being here.

I'll tell a quick story. A hundred years ago, when our kids were very young, I can remember very well sitting down with my wife Denise to make a decision on whether she could afford to go to work or had to stay home. The costs even then were so significant. I remember that we were there with a calculator. We had two kids, so it would be this much and you make this much, but then there's the mileage and all these things, so we made a conscious decision that Denise would stay home for many years to look after the kids because we couldn't afford day care.

Obviously, all of us have constituents who come in and tell us those same stories. Costs now are anywhere from \$15,000 to \$30,000 per year for families. Those are after-tax dollars. It's just significant. Again, as I said in our last meeting, we're all here to do great things for our constituents and our country, but this program is truly transformational.

Could you comment on how significant it is for families, number one, and what an economic opportunity it's going to be to bring so many parents, in particular women, back into the workforce and what that's going to do for our economy?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Yes. My goodness, the stories I get to hear from people across the country are just amazing. It's life-changing for so many people. I've had people come up to me to say they've decided to have a second kid because of this. How much more meaningful do you get? I heard from a family that was able to keep their home because of this program. They had a variable-rate mortgage, and the reduction in child care fees meant that they could afford the difference. They were actually having to decide between the two, and this has changed their lives. A woman in Nova Scotia said to me that because of the child care fee reductions, when she goes to the grocery store, she doesn't decide if she can buy chicken or not. It's so meaningful.

In every province or territory that I visit, every time I go, I meet with a mom—and I'm sure there are dads, too; I just haven't talked to them yet—who says she is going back to work because of this. She can now afford to go back to work. I know there are people who say women shouldn't have to make that choice, but it's not a choice if you can't afford it. The empowerment and the ability to have that financial security is so important and it's so meaningful. I have to say that it's just been incredible.

If women in the rest of Canada rejoin the workforce at the same rates that Quebec women did 25 years ago, that's 240,000 additional people working in our country.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** That number is substantial.

Following along with that, I remember when it was announced. I'm in Saint John—Rothesay, New Brunswick, and our provincial government is a Conservative government, with Premier Higgs, and it was Dominic Cardy who was minister at that point, I believe. I remember looking at our province and across the country and saying that there are probably going to be a lot of provinces that won't sign on, and it's going to be a challenge. To your credit and to the department's credit, they signed up one by one, I say begrudgingly, but they know it's a good program. Whether it was Premier Kenney, Premier Moe or Premier Higgs, they knew it was a good program.

You went across the country and you negotiated these deals. Can you share your experiences of how that went? You probably had more challenges in some places than in others, but can you share with us how that rolled out across the country?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** How long do we have? It's 30 seconds? Okay, it went great.

One of the things that became increasingly clear was the unbelievable economic benefit that provinces and territories would receive, both in revenues returned to government coffers because of increased taxes and spending and also the impact of the pandemic,

the “she-cession”, and the fact that so many women who had been out of the workforce because of the pandemic were now returning. It was so important.

There's a labour shortage in this country, and there's a housing shortage. One of the things that I think convinced a few governments is that these are workers who are already here and who already have housing as well. Most importantly, the economics don't lie. This is really smart economic and social policy, and it's hard to argue with those facts when you have them in front of you.

• (0930)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Bérubé, the floor is yours for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, how does the agreement with Quebec differ from the agreements signed with the other provinces, territories and Indigenous communities under the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** As you know, it is an asymmetrical agreement, based solely on the number of children under the age of 12. It represents about \$6 billion over five years that will simply be transferred to Quebec.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** You said that Bill C-35 states that the First Nations were involved in developing the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework.

Can you tell us what groups were consulted and how many times they were consulted?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Are you talking about consultations on the bill or on the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework?

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** I'm talking about consultations concerning the bill.

**Hon. Karina Gould:** I'm going to let Ms. Reddin speak to that.

[*English*]

**Ms. Cheri Reddin (Director General, Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat, Department of Employment and Social Development):** We were very interested in hearing from indigenous governments, organizations and representatives on Bill C-35. Formal outreach was undertaken to over 50 governments, organizations and stakeholders early last year. There was promotion through some of the existing partnerships to solicit feedback and interest around the proposed legislation.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** How did you divide the budget among the Indigenous communities all across Canada?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** For the Indigenous communities, the budget allocated to child care and early childhood centres is divided among the distinct groups: the First Nations and the Métis and Inuit, and also the self-governing First Nations. The way the budget is divided is decided on a regional basis for each of those organizations. It is not divided by the federal government. It is transferred to the regional governments, which distribute it themselves.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** So you are going to distribute \$30 billion over five years to the Indigenous communities.

**Hon. Karina Gould:** The \$30 billion is the total that will be distributed to all of them.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** It is what will be distributed to all of the First Nations, the Inuit, and the others.

**Hon. Karina Gould:** That also includes the provinces and territories.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** How are the communities reacting when it comes to the distribution? It will be the provinces that control the budgets, but have you had follow-up concerning the reactions of the Indigenous communities?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** There are two frameworks: one with the provinces and territories and the other with the Indigenous communities. The provinces and territories will decide how to distribute the funds based on an action plan that they send us every two years. With the Indigenous communities it is more autonomous, but there are still principles that guide that initiative and that were developed with the Indigenous partners.

I can tell you about my most recent experience, two years ago, with the Manitoba Métis Federation. It has already opened 12 early childhood centres and is planning to open four more, for a total of 200 more spaces in Manitoba. I was in St. Eustache, a Métis community, where I visited the early childhood centre. Half of the 40 or so spaces it provides are reserved for Métis children and the other half are open to other communities. The staff do truly excellent work, based on learning the language and culture. The learning really is based on their Indigenous traditions.

● (0935)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Bérubé.

Madame Gazan, you have two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much, Chair.

The Poverty Reduction Act establishes a national advisory council very much like the one we have in Bill C-35, but unlike Bill C-35, the national advisory council that's being used in the Poverty Reduction Act is required to submit a report to the minister on the progress being made in terms of poverty reduction. The minister is required to table the report in Parliament.

Clause 16 in the bill does not include a requirement for indicators to measure quality, accessibility, affordability and inclusion to be in the minister's report. The sector has raised concerns about how to ensure government accountability.

What is your plan for accountability? Are you willing to amend it so it's more similar to the Poverty Reduction Act?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** In this legislation, we have put forward that it will be the minister doing the annual reporting to Parliament. Of course, provinces and territories have to report to us on an annual basis with regard to the progress and challenges they have. We need to do that.

It's really about the minister reporting. The national advisory council on ELCC is to report to the minister, and then the minister will report to Parliament and to the public.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Are you willing to amend it, however, so that it's consistent with requests coming from the sector in terms of accountability measures?

I know that's in the bill, but that's not what's coming from the sector in terms of what they're asking for to ensure accountability. Are you willing to support the sector in their request for greater accountability?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Could I ask why it would be preferable for the advisory council to report, as opposed to the minister?

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** What we've heard from the sector is that's exactly what they're supporting. It's something similar to the Poverty Reduction Act. We've seen this in action. The sector is asking for the bill to be amended to mirror something similar.

As the minister, are you willing to explore that further, in terms of making amendments to support greater accountability?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Accountability is always important, which is why we have so many measures in place through the framework and through the legislation.

It's not something that I, personally, have heard asked for by the sector. If you have any written submissions, I'd be willing to look at them.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Absolutely. I'll do that.

**The Chair:** Madame Ferreri, you have five minutes.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister.

There is no doubt at all that the welfare of the child should be at the epicentre of this conversation. The best investment we can ever make is in our children. When we have mentally healthy children—psychologically and physically safe children, who feel psychologically and physically safe—we get mentally healthy adults. Without a doubt, this is such a huge topic.

You said in your national framework, “quality, accessibility, affordability, inclusivity and flexibility”. These are the pillars for which you are fighting, which I completely concur with.

I ask you, Minister, if you would be open to amending the bill as it is currently written under proposed paragraph 7(1)(a) to say “all”. We know that the provinces set the standards for child care, not the federal government, so it would be to “facilitate access to all early learning and child care programs and services”.

Would you be willing to amend it to that, so that we are not excluding over half of the providers? According to Stats Canada, over half of all child care in Canada is unlicensed and home-based child care.

Would you be willing to amend it to add the word “all”?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Ms. Ferreri, it's very important for us that this remain with licensed child care. I would assume—

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** As I just said, Minister, it's provinces that set the standards.

**Hon. Karina Gould:** I think you're misconstruing many different issues here.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** So you will not—

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Ms. Ferreri, can we just explain the difference? I think you're conflating a bunch of different things here that are not necessarily correct.

Provinces and territories also only fund licensed child care. They don't usually fund unlicensed child care, because it's unlicensed.

Home care, so long as it's licensed, is included in this. As I explained to Ms. Gray earlier, we include it under the not-for-profit umbrella.

In fact, all licensed child care, whether it's for—

• (0940)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Minister, because I only have so much time—

**Hon. Karina Gould:** I know, but I think it's really important that you understand this, because otherwise—

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** It's also really important that this is my time, Minister, to get as many answers for the people as possible.

**Hon. Karina Gould:** It's also important that you understand, so that you're not sharing this information with people.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** It's also important that you understand that all home care needs to be included, because you're not saying.... You're doing the opposite. If you are saying “quality, accessibility, affordability, inclusivity and flexibility”, why wouldn't you put the word “all”? Why are you not open to amending that?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Ms. Ferreri, it's important that we take a step back so that everyone can understand what we're talking about.

We're talking about licensed spaces, which is important. Provinces and territories determine the licensing requirements. It's important that any—

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** However, many home-based child cares are licensed. What I'm asking—

**Hon. Karina Gould:** They are included. I've said this four times already.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** I've said this seven times.

It says, “in particular those that are provided by public and not for profit child”—

**Hon. Karina Gould:** You're not getting it.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** You're not getting it either. I am representing the thousands of people writing to me, Minister. I'm here. I want access—

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Ms. Ferreri, licensed home care is included.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Then why do you have it written in the bill, repeatedly, that it's primarily “public and not for profit”, when you could just say “all licensed”? Why wouldn't you just say “all licensed”? Why not change the language?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Ms. Ferreri, again, in the definition of not-for-profit child care that we have in the multilateral frameworks, which is compatible with and complementary to the legislation, licensed home care is included under the not-for-profit umbrella, so what you're saying is actually there—not unlicensed home care, but many provinces and territories are doing a lot of work with unlicensed home care to bring them into the licensed system.

If we're providing public dollars, we want to ensure that child care providers are meeting those high standards with regard to the quality and the safety requirements that I'm sure, as a parent yourself, you also want to see. You began by talking about the welfare of children. That's extraordinarily important.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** It is extraordinarily important.

We'll move on, because, to me, what you're saying and what you're doing are not the same. You're saying inclusivity and then your wording says the opposite. We will have to agree to disagree—

**Hon. Karina Gould:** But that's just not true.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** —and I hope we can find it.

It is true.

**Hon. Karina Gould:** It's not.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** I'm going to move on, Minister.

**Hon. Karina Gould:** We can provide you the information so that you have it clearly.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Minister, you said today in your testimony that “you can't have every...voice represented” at the table. However, you do not have one single voice on the national council that represents home-based child care. I want to read you a letter that was sent to me and to you, and I want to know what you want to say on the record about it—

**The Chair:** Madam Ferreri, your time has gone by.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'll give a short time to the minister to respond, if there was something there. Then we'll conclude with Mr. Collins.

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think it's really important, because what Ms. Ferreri was saying was actually inaccurate. I'd be happy to table this with the committee so that everyone is clear. Of course unlicensed child care is not included, for clear reasons. However, licensed home care is part of the not-for-profit umbrella, and they are included in this. That has always been the case.

I think it's really important that we're speaking from a factual basis.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

We will conclude with Mr. Collins for five minutes.

**Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I want to commend you, Minister, much like my colleagues have past and present, in terms of the Herculean task you had in getting these agreements signed across the country. As someone who has been in politics a long time, I know it's not often that we see different parties of all stripes support legislation unanimously. You have that across the country. We don't have that here. We know the opposition's feelings on this.

I agree with Ms. Ferreri with some of the comments when she talked about the principles and how good this legislation is, which I know she voted against, but I think it's—

• (0945)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I did not vote against this bill.

**Mr. Chad Collins:** I'm sorry. I apologize if I mistook that.

I would say that when we see parties come together from across the country, we know that we've done something right. We see that, I think, with the Canada disability benefit as well. This committee had the opportunity to talk to Canadians and work with the minister in terms of historic legislation. I would put this in that category as well.

There is some fear from this sector, though, that at some point in time in the future a government will rip up these agreements. That's coming from service providers. That's coming from those people today who are receiving the service and the reduced fees and all the benefits that come with it.

Can you give some assurance to the committee and to those watching with regard to how this legislation is protected on a go-forward basis? We've seen political theatre in the past. We went through that in the last election—i.e., if these agreements are signed, they're going to be ripped up. I guess I would look to you for some assurance in terms of how we assure Canadians that this program is here for the long haul.

**Hon. Karina Gould:** Well, the best assurance is not to elect a Conservative government. We saw Stephen Harper rip up the child care agreements in 2006, and Mr. Poilievre has called this a “slush fund” for parents. That's probably the most secure way.

What I think is important about this legislation is that it's trying to safeguard as much as possible from a future—likely Conservative—government that doesn't necessarily believe in child care. However, I also believe that once this is established, it's hard to take it away, right? Provinces and territories are going to rely on support from the federal government. That was part of the agreements we signed, knowing that we would be bringing forward this legislation. I think any future government would then have to justify it to Canadians. They would have to change the law. They would have to tell Canadian families that their child care fees are going up because they don't believe in supporting them.

I think this is one additional safeguard that Canadian families, child care providers and provinces and territories have to ensure that the federal government is there for the long haul.

**Mr. Chad Collins:** Thank you for that.

Is there a review process in terms of ensuring that this is a fluid process? Will there will be check-in points? Will there be opportunities for provincial and future federal governments to look at how these agreements are working? Can you elaborate on that process in terms tweaking things if they need to be tweaked? Is there a process to ensure that happens?

**Hon. Karina Gould:** The legislation is there for the long term. It commits the federal government to the long term. It outlines the principles, the guiding factors and the spirit of what these child care agreements are.

Then there's the complementary multilateral framework that sets out the agreements on a five-year basis. I think one of the reasons it's important to do it on a five-year basis is that we're building something new. We have not done this before in Canada. This is a new partnership with provinces and territories, and we need to be able to have an ongoing dialogue with PTs and an ongoing dialogue with indigenous partners to make sure we get this right.

That's something I think is really exciting. We feel the excitement across the country. It's making a difference in people's lives every day.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead on a point of order.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you.

I want to correct the record, because I think there was some confusion. I just want to say on the record to the minister that she was correct. I think there was some overlap, and I want to say I didn't mean to include unlicensed day cares. I was asking for an amendment, and I think there was some back-and-forth.

I just want to correct the record. She is correct, but what I was asking was for the amendment to add all small female licensed day cares. I never meant to include unlicensed ones. That wasn't what I was trying to say, but if we would be open to amending it so that small licensed female private operators—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Ferreri.

That is more debate, but we will allow you to clear the record.

Mr. Collins, you have about 20 seconds. Have you concluded?

**Mr. Chad Collins:** Well, 20 seconds isn't a long time.

I just want to say thank you again, Minister. You have done tremendous work on this file. We appreciate it. I think politicians and elected representatives of all political stripes across this country appreciate it, and you have done tremendous work.

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

Thank you, Minister, for appearing and for a lively discussion back and forth at times. Thank you to the witnesses who appeared with you.

We conclude the first hour. We will suspend for a few minutes while the next witnesses are admitted to the committee meeting.

Thank you again, Minister and staff.

We will suspend for three minutes.

• (0950) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (0955)

**The Chair:** Welcome back.

The committee will resume its study of Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

To assist the interpreters in their work, I kindly remind all members and witnesses appearing today to introduce themselves when speaking, and to speak slowly. You may use the official language of your choice. If there is an interruption in interpretation services, please get my attention. We'll suspend while it is being corrected.

Please direct your questions and responses through me, the chair, and wait until I recognize you.

We will begin this last hour with three witnesses: Monsieur Pierre Fortin, emeritus professor of economics; Krystal Churcher, chair of the Association of Alberta Childcare Entrepreneurs; and Dr. Sophie Mathieu, senior program specialist at the Vanier Institute of the Family.

We will begin with Mr. Fortin

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin, the floor is yours for five minutes.

[English]

**Mr. Pierre Fortin (Emeritus Professor of Economics, As an Individual):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

“Emeritus professor” just means that I'm old, so don't worry about the title.

I'm very enchanted and most honoured to have this invitation from you.

I will begin in French, but then switch to English.

[Translation]

My presentation will focus on Quebec's experience in the last 25 years.

At a time when the entire country has embarked on a process of rapid development of child care services, it is important to understand the successes and difficulties Quebec has experienced since 1997, so that everyone's judgment over the coming years will be informed.

[English]

Quebec's Educational Childcare Act of 1996 set two explicit objectives. One was to help families improve their work-life balance. The second was to enhance child development with a strong emphasis on equality of opportunity.

After 25 years, there are two broad outcomes. First, work-life balance has made huge progress. Second, child development and equality of opportunity have been enhanced, but are still very much a work in progress.

Quebec parents initially had access to child care spaces at a low universal daily fee of \$5, which has been adjusted upward to, currently, \$8.85. Since 2009, a private full-fee, for-profit sector has been allowed to develop competitively with the low-fee, non-profit sector by giving parents access to a generous provincial refundable tax credit on child care expenses.

I would emphasize eight takeaways from this 25-year experiment.

First, child care utilization has expanded in the province to around 300,000 spaces, which is up from 79,000 in 1997. The child care system has remained hugely popular ever since 1997, at over 90%.

Second, system costs have been under control. The total cost in 2022 is some \$3.1 billion, which is somewhat less than the current OECD median of 0.6% of GDP.

Third, the labour force participation of Quebec women has risen to the highest level worldwide. It's on par with Sweden. In 2022, 88% of Quebec women aged 25 to 54 were in the labour force, compared to 84% in other provinces and 76% in the United States.

Fourth, women's economic security and lifetime wages have increased significantly. The male-female hourly wage gap in Quebec has been cut by half in the last 20 years, going down from 17% to 9%. Women can now pursue continuous careers instead of staggered careers that are caught in a string of job separations, promotion delays and wage stagnation after every new birth.

Fifth, our best estimate is that Quebec's GDP is likely 1.5%—or currently \$8 billion—higher than it would be without the child care system.

Sixth, the larger labour force and broad economic activity allow the child care program to more than pay for itself. It has not required any increase in taxes. The fiscal surpluses can be reinvested to expand public services or to reduce taxes. There's a choice.

Seventh, the unanimous findings of the psycho-medical literature are that the quality of child care and its favourable impact on child development are highest in the low-fee, non-profit early childhood centres—the *centres de la petite enfance*, or CPE,—and lowest in the private full-fee, for-profit centres.

There is no way to escape the conclusion that private markets for child care have, unfortunately, been a quality failure. I'm saying "unfortunately" because I have defended private market solutions throughout my career, but a fact is a fact. It therefore appears very clear to most—including many private for-profit providers—that the way for the province to go about this from now on is to raise quality levels, by all means and everywhere, up to CPE standards.

- (1000)

Last but not least, access for disadvantaged children to good-quality care is lagging and should be a top priority for policy.

In conclusion, the Quebec system has not been following a Robin Hood-type targeted approach but the Scandinavian tradition of universality. The new federal transfers to provinces for child care are also conditioned on generalizing the Scandinavian approach to all of Canada. The Quebec evidence compellingly suggests that this is the way to go.

There are three main lessons to be drawn.

One, the economic well-being of women has been greatly enhanced.

Two, there has been no need to increase taxes.

Three, the obvious challenges now are these. One is getting rid of the remaining shortages of spaces. Two is increasing quality everywhere up to CPE standards. Three is attracting more disadvantaged children into the high-quality sector.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Monsieur Fortin.

We'll go to Madame Churcher for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Krystal Churcher (Chair, Association of Alberta Child-care Entrepreneurs):** Good morning. I am very grateful for the opportunity to share with this committee this morning. My name is Krystal Churcher. I am a private child care operator in Alberta. I am also the chair of the Alberta Association of Childcare Entrepreneurs, which is a non-profit industry association that represents the interests of private child care operators in Alberta, who currently make up 70% of our child care delivery.

What we have heard around Bill C-35 and the Canada-wide early learning and child care program is all very high-level information with very lofty intentions. I want to provide some of the on-the-ground, real-life experiences that operators and families are facing.

This program and legislation are all about the long term and entrench the federal government's vision for early learning and child care. It is critical that we move forward in an aligned way that respects the rights of children to quality, flexible child care and choice for parents.

The goal of this bill is for all families to have access to high-quality, affordable, inclusive child care. However, what we are seeing on the ground is the human toll and the impact around the roll-out of this program.

The bill was introduced without adequate consultation with all industry stakeholders and without respecting how the child care

sector has evolved in provincial jurisdictions across the country. What we're seeing is a program that has created a demand without the infrastructure to support it, which is causing wait-lists, a two-tiered system and undue stress to families and operators. Women entrepreneurs are facing bankruptcy and closure of businesses that have now lost all their value. The system is, frankly, not equitably accessible and is failing to meet the promises to parents and families. Operators are asking what the real cost is of meeting this \$10-a-day goal. Parents are losing choice; the quality of programming is at risk; educators are burned out; and women are losing their businesses.

Bill C-35 does not sufficiently recognize that Canada's current child care system still very much depends upon thousands of private operators despite directional preference for the non-profit business model. When subsidies go to child care spaces rather than directly to parents, it becomes a form of soft coercion. This doesn't create options that respect the difference of families or provide them with a form of child care they choose.

Decreased fees, which are also only available at specific centres, are actually eliminating parental choice and provide a forced standardized system. By limiting access only to programs that are predominantly non-profit, this program is forcing families to surrender their choice in child care.

While this program advocates for the full economic potential of women, our sector is made up of largely female entrepreneurs like me, and we are seeing the expropriation of our businesses. We all want to see women succeed, but what about the women who are investing in creating child care spaces in their communities? By wanting to provide affordable child care to the families we serve and opting into this program, we have had an expansion freeze placed on our private businesses, lost the ability to control the fees for our services, and ultimately lost the value of our investments.

The truth is that the promised child care spaces are not actually available to all families. In Alberta, what we're seeing is urban cities with wait-lists of 75 to 150 families on average and rural areas like Grande Prairie having wait-lists of 600 or more families. This legislation promises access to child care regardless of where families live, but that's not the reality. Parents are facing less access because the program has created a demand that can't be met, resulting in wait-lists.

When the guiding intent is to prioritize non-profit child care spaces, private expansion has been halted, yet demand for private programs continues to grow. Increased demand for child care has forced private programs to expand to meet need, despite having no access to grants for parents. This is resulting in parents paying upwards of \$50 or more per day for the same program in the same centre. In Alberta, we are seeing a two-tiered system.

Do we really have affordable child care if we can't access it? The CWELCC program does not create equitable access to child care, especially for lower-income parents who were promised support to go back into the workforce. Parents and operators alike cannot understand how this CWELCC affordability grant funding is provided to every family, regardless of income bracket, when operators currently witness the majority of those on wait-lists fall into low-income brackets. Right now, families of varying income levels benefit, not necessarily prioritizing those who need affordability the most.

In closing, I urge the committee to take an approach to meet the Government of Canada's goals to make Canada child care more affordable to families.

• (1005)

I leave you with five solutions. They are to provide funding directly to families; change funding to an income-based model on a sliding scale so that true equitable need and accessibility can be met; focus legislation around the concept of parental choice, regardless of business model, and instead have the funding follow the child; open the full expansion of child care to private operators to meet the demand for child care; and respect and allow free market competition as a way to ensure quality and innovative niche programming that meets the needs of all parents.

We have a duty to Canadian families and children to make sure that we create a program that truly represents the needs of families, protects the quality of care for children and provides real accessibility to all families. We can't continue to ignore the issues that we're seeing across the country and move ahead with a well-intended but flawed program.

I'd like to share a few stories from operators this morning. I had one child care operator reach out to me....

I'm sorry. Am I out of time?

• (1010)

**The Chair:** Ms. Churcher, we're over, but because the first one was over, I'll give you the flexibility to—

**Ms. Krystal Churcher:** It's just one story.

**The Chair:** Okay, that's fine. Go ahead.

**Ms. Krystal Churcher:** Thank you.

I have one child care operator in a rural, under-serviced area of Alberta who has proudly operated a high-quality day care centre for 17 years. She has invested in creating 194 child care spaces for her community. When asked how she felt when the CWELCC program was announced, she said that she was excited for families to finally have access to more affordable child care and optimistic that it would bring relief to families sitting on wait-lists.

Yesterday she sent a letter to all of her 194 families in her centre, plus 563 families on her wait-list, to notify them that she was closing her centre. After 17 years of successful operation, the viability of her business is gone. With high inflation, fee caps and expansion restrictions on private centres, her centre is financially handicapped. She has had to make the heartbreaking decision to close a business that she built, because she can't take the financial risk of signing a new lease or investing further into expanding her centre

with the unknown of a cost control framework looming. She writes that she is worried that the \$10-a-day goal will be at the cost of quality care for children.

These are the decisions facing operators on the ground right now, who are deciding to walk away from something they have proudly created because they can no longer carry the financial burden or because they simply can't agree with the reduced quality of care to bring the costs down.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

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

We'll go to Dr. Mathieu for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Dr. Sophie Mathieu (Senior Program Specialist, Vanier Institute of the Family):** Thank you.

My name is Sophie Mathieu. I have a doctorate in sociology and I specialize in the study of family policy in Quebec. I work at the Vanier Institute of the Family as a senior program specialist and I am a member of the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care. However, my comments today do not reflect the Council's position, and will echo some of Mr. Fortin's observations.

As you know, Quebec created a network of low-cost child care services at the turn of the millennium, and so...

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Dr. Mathieu, there's a bit of an issue with the quality of the interpretation. Could you slow down, please?

[*Translation*]

**Dr. Sophie Mathieu:** Right, I will speak a little slower.

Quebec has a rich history of 25 years of lessons, successes and challenges in connection with its child care services. In Quebec, there is virtually no further debate about the wisdom of offering low-cost child care. Nonetheless, the network faces other challenges that are well documented, such as the shortage of spaces, the quality of care, and problems recruiting and retaining staff. Since these problems have been well documented already, today I want to talk about three lessons from Quebec's experience in connection with its child care services network that are less well known.

The first lesson to note is that not all child care services are day-cares.



In the Fall Economic Statement 2020, Chrystia Freeland said: "Just as Saskatchewan once showed Canada the way on health care..., Quebec can show us the way on child care." The deputy prime minister wanted to draw on the Quebec model for creating a national child care network. In its original form, the Quebec model is not a system in which most services are offered in daycares; rather, as Mr. Fortin said, services are offered in CPEs, early childhood centres. It is important to understand that "daycares" and "CPEs" are not synonyms, because they do not refer to the same type of child care.

By definition, a daycare is a private for-profit business. Daycares are therefore not central to the Quebec model. I would note, as a brief aside, that there are two types of daycares in Quebec: those that offer subsidized spaces at the same price as the spaces offered in the CPEs, and unsubsidized centres that offer spaces at the market rate, which is well above \$10 per day. All CPEs, on the other hand, are created within the social economy and are not operated for profit. By definition, a CPE may therefore not be a daycare.

The difference between a CPE and a daycare is not just semantic, nor is it ideological. As Mr. Fortin said, daycares in Quebec offer lower quality services, as compared to CPEs, even though, overall, Quebec cannot boast that it offers high quality child care services to a majority of children. At the beginning of the 2000s, a study showed that only 27 per cent of child care facilities offered a level of quality ranging from good to excellent; that proportion rose to 35 per cent in CPEs but fell to 14 per cent in daycares.

The second lesson to note is that even when a majority of spaces are offered at low cost, less well-off families have lower access to high quality child care.

Here again, I will somewhat echo what Mr. Fortin has already said. In Quebec, we know that 36 per cent of children under the age of four do not have access to regulated child care, and yet we know very little about these children and the systemic, economic and cultural barriers that impede the families' access to child care.

Nonetheless, the 2020-2021 report of the Auditor General of Quebec to the National Assembly offers some information about the disparities in access to high quality child care for families in Montreal. For example, in the Park-Extension and Saint-Michel neighbourhoods and in the borough of Montreal North, which are extremely disadvantaged, a much higher number of spaces offered is available in daycares than in CPEs. In Westmount, on the other hand, a particularly wealthy Montreal neighbourhood, more spaces are available in CPEs. In simple terms, poor families have greater access to commercial daycares that offer lower quality services, while richer families have better access to CPEs at present.

The third and final lesson to note is that the positive effect of child care on the economic activity of mothers in Quebec has to be considered in context.

Creating a child care services network was widely and rightly justified by reference to the importance of supporting women's participation in the labour market and the need to achieve equality between the sexes.

• (1015)

While the effect of child care services on mothers' participation in the labour market is undeniable—I am the mother of three children myself and I could not have pursued my doctoral studies and my career if I had not been able to rely on low-cost child care—it must be pointed out that Quebec has a coherent family policy that consists of more than offering low-cost child care.

Since 2006, Quebec has had its own parental benefits program, the Québec Parental Insurance Plan, which offers more accessible and more generous benefits than those offered everywhere else in Canada. The high rate of participation by mothers in the labour market is therefore a result of an institutional context that goes beyond the availability of child care, even though child care is essential.

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

[English]

I would ask you to conclude any comment that you have in your answers to questions.

[Translation]

**Dr. Sophie Mathieu:** Of course. I will conclude my presentation by saying that I can answer questions in French or English. If you want to get the full text of my remarks, you can go to my website, [sophiemathieu.ca](http://sophiemathieu.ca).

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Doctor. You can submit your written text to the committee for full consideration, as well as cover any material in answers to questions, which I'm sure you'll get.

We'll now begin with Madame Ferreri for six minutes.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses here. It's great testimony that will help us ensure that we are putting forth the best possible solutions for the welfare of our children.

Krystal, if I may call you that, I want to touch on something that we've heard from the minister repeatedly. If you were watching the exchange prior to this, I was really trying to push to have the language of the bill changed to include these independently owned businesses and licensed home day cares. The minister has said that the licensed private day cares are included in the bill. She's pretty adamant about that.

How do you reconcile that? If they're included, why is there such suffering in your industry of these women entrepreneur home-based child cares?

• (1020)

**Ms. Krystal Churcher:** I think there's a little bit of confusion about some of the language. My understanding is that home-based day cares, which in Alberta we call "day homes", are being included under this agreement as a non-profit model. That's very confusing and misleading to me, because those are very much a for-profit model. They are women who usually stay at home. You're allowed to have a certain number of children in your home. You want to be licensed. I want 100% to support licensed, regulated, quality care.

That is separate from, let's say, what my centre offers. I am a private child care operator. I have a commercial space that I lease. I operate under the exact same regulations and standards as those of a non-profit business model. We follow all the same guidelines. The only thing different is our business model.

They are two separate things. I do believe that a home-based day home would be a for-profit business model as well. I find it very misleading to be included in a non-profit structure. As for-profit private child care centres, we are not able to expand and do not have access for our families in our care in the same way that a non-profit business model does under this agreement.

I wholeheartedly think that if you are supporting family accessibility to child care spaces and you want to help alleviate some of the wait-lists and the demand that we're seeing, then it should include all licensed child care providers.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you for that feedback. I think that sets the record straight in terms of changing that language to include "all licensed", which aligns with the pillars of ensuring that.

I'll come back to you if I have time, Krystal, but I'd now like to go to Dr. Mathieu, if I may.

What would you like to be called—"Dr. Mathieu" or "Sophie"?

**Dr. Sophie Mathieu:** Sophie is fine.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you.

What can we learn, or what would you like to see changed in the bill, if you recommend any changes, to strengthen it to ensure that...? Quebec has set a standard, and we do have the data, which I think is wonderful. We can look into the future and say, "Hey, this is what happened in Quebec." Also, it gives us a great opportunity to tighten up when unintended consequences or gaps happen in the system for accessing quality licensed child care.

Is there anything you'd like to see worded differently in the bill that would ensure access and inclusivity?

**Dr. Sophie Mathieu:** Of course, but there are things in Quebec that haven't been resolved after 25 years. One thing is that access to child care is not a right, not even in Quebec. It doesn't seem to be a right in the bill either. If we want to really be serious about child care, we need to think about the fact that we would never tell a parent that their child cannot access grade 1 because there is not enough space in their elementary school. To have access to child care as a right is something that hasn't been accomplished in Quebec yet, but that's something that we dream of for Quebec and obviously for the other provinces. Only if it becomes a right can we then make sure that it's inclusive and that we can work on issues like quality and others that you have identified.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you for that. That's interesting feedback from what you guys have seen.

As my follow-up question, how do you ensure access if the gap to access is closed off? We've heard from Krystal about meeting the demand. There's a massive wait-list. There's massive demand. As I said earlier when I was interviewing the minister, I have mothers and fathers phoning me and saying, "I'm not going to have any more children. We can't have any more children. We can't afford it. We don't have any child care."

In principle, I understand what this bill wants to accomplish, but I feel like it's falling short on how it's going to do that. Do you have a specific recommendation, Sophie, on how to improve access? I know you've said "a right". Is there anything else tangible we could put into the legislation?

**Dr. Sophie Mathieu:** That's a very difficult one.

I would have to come back to you. That's something I've been thinking about. Maybe Pierre has more ideas, but that's something that—

• (1025)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** I see he has his hand up, but I don't know how much time I have.

Pierre, do you want to jump in there?

**The Chair:** You have 20 seconds, Monsieur Fortin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Fortin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is very important to understand clearly that in our system here in Quebec, private daycares compete not on quality, but on price. To keep the price at \$40 per day per child, a lot of things have to be left out, and, in general, it is the quality that declines. I don't see daycares offering to have parents pay \$50 rather than \$40 to get better quality services: the parents would say "whatever", and would choose another daycare that keeps its price at \$40.

The problem with child care services is that they are not a tangible good, like frozen Brussels sprouts or like cars. The consequences associated with the quality of the services will be seen in children in a much longer term. As a result, it is difficult. It would be possible to keep the private daycares in the system, on the condition that the authorities impose strict quality criteria and monitor compliance with the criteria very closely.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Fortin:** However, a majority of daycare advocates favour the CPEs.

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

[English]

I have to stop there. We're well over the time.

Mr. Van Bynen, you have six minutes, please.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I grew up in a family of 15, and I think child care in our household would have made a huge difference in the livelihood of our family. I'm quite pleased to see that we are moving forward in these important social support programs that strengthen families and give women an opportunity to go forward.

I'd like to explore the Quebec experience with Mr. Fortin a little further. Paragraph 7(1)(a) of the bill proposes the guiding principles for the federal investments to aim to “facilitate access to early learning and child care programs and services—in particular those that are provided by public and not for profit child care providers”, which continues on the discussion we're having now.

You mentioned earlier that one of your concerns is that there is a shortage of spaces. Do you feel that this is the correct approach and, in your opinion, will targeting the support primarily for public and not-for-profit providers provide enough child care spaces to meet the current and future demand?

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Fortin:** Yes. At the end of the 2000s, there was still a significant shortage of spaces in the Quebec system. That is why the government stepped in, to increase competition with what Ms. Mathieu was just describing as “private daycares”. That worked very well and a large number of private daycares were opened.

University researchers analyzed the quality of their services based on all sorts of recognized international criteria, and revealed that only a small minority of private daycares could be considered to be good or excellent.

That is the reason why we realized that private daycares were competitive on price, but were not competitive on quality, and that if they were to be kept in the system, they would have to be required to meet the quality standards applied in early childhood centres, the CPEs, and obviously they would have to be monitored. That has been very difficult to do. Even many owners of private daycares are now calling on the government to transform them into CPEs, to give parents quality guarantees.

• (1030)

[English]

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Thank you.

I would like to come back to that later, but there is one other question I want to pursue, and that is with Dr. Mathieu.

I note that you're on the national council. My question is this: What were your successes, and what are your challenges? I see that under section 14, your mandate is to “provide advice to the Minister” and to “conduct engagement activities”.

Someone earlier made the statement that there was not sufficient consultation. Could you talk to me about your successes relative to

consultation and engagement, and some of the challenges going forward?

[Translation]

**Dr. Sophie Mathieu:** I can't speak today as a representative of the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care. I was told that very clearly before I appeared before the committee.

I just want to say that I do not agree entirely with the comment that was made. The Council is very broadly representative and brings together people who represent Quebec, Indigenous communities and educators, as well as a lot of people working in the field.

I don't want to make any comments on the work done by the Council. However, regarding its composition, I think it really is very representative and offers a high degree of expertise, coming from both academics and people in the field. There is also good representation of Indigenous communities.

[English]

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Thank you.

I'll go back to Mr. Fortin this time.

With my banking background, I'd say that we need to recognize some goals that are measurable, achievable and realistic, and that we have a reasonable timetable on those things.

Based on your experience in Quebec, what would be reasonable goals that should be set out so we could see that the program is successful?

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Fortin:** My experience, too, comes partly from work in the field, because I spent 19 years with what we called “daycares” at that time, but that were child care services. In addition, my wife started an early childhood centre at Radio-Canada, where she was the big boss at the time.

Quebec's success derives precisely from the fact that we have developed a system of early childhood centres, the CPEs, that imposes a number of criteria on the process and structure of child care and requires private child care services and the CPEs to have parents with roots in the communities, who can give feedback, on their boards of directors...

[English]

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Mr. Fortin, I'll interrupt. I'm running out of time.

**The Chair:** The time has run out.

We only have one round, so I will move to Madame Bérubé.

[Translation]

The floor is yours for six minutes.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses who are here today.

Mr. Fortin, you said earlier that there are five main lessons to be learned. Quebec is a leader and model in this field. What would it be essential to add to Bill C-35?

**Mr. Pierre Fortin:** I don't really see anything. There is nothing essential lacking. If we wanted to make a compromise in connection with what Ms. Ferreri recommends, it would have to be clearly stated that private daycares could be allowed in the system on the condition that national and international quality standards be imposed and complied with, just as in the not-for-profit sector. That is the thing that could be incorporated.

I would like to add one comment. The word "Indigenous" is used 31 times in a five-page bill. I think it is important to help those communities. I have colleagues at the University of British Columbia and in the federal Department of Finance, Donna Feir and Jasmin Thomas, who have shown that Quebec's system has resulted in a much higher labour market participation rate among Inuit women in northern Quebec than in the three other Inuit regions elsewhere in Canada. That is part of the system's success, and establishing the system within the Indigenous communities is very important.

• (1035)

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Ms. Mathieu, thank you for the clarification you provided concerning the distinctions between daycares and CPEs. It is important that the committee hear about that.

Knowing that the public data on Indigenous children that the government is working with are out of date, how can we make sure that Bill C-35 meets the needs of the First Nations and the Inuit and Métis?

**Dr. Sophie Mathieu:** That is really a tough question.

Because I am not part of those communities, I am absolutely not in a good position to answer. They are the ones who should be asked the question, rather than a white woman who has no Indigenous roots. I don't consider myself to be competent to answer that question.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Fine.

Mr. Fortin and Ms. Mathieu, who do you think should sit on the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care?

**Dr. Sophie Mathieu:** You are asking me who should sit on the Council, but the Council has already been formed and is in operation. I think the right people have been selected. If you want to see the list of members, it's available online.

I don't know whether that is a good answer to your question.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** That's good.

Do you think that Bill C-35 would achieve its targets in both rural and urban areas?

**Dr. Sophie Mathieu:** I don't know.

Mr. Fortin, do you have a comment?

**Mr. Pierre Fortin:** I'm not very familiar with the differences between rural and urban areas. In rural areas, the distance between where a person lives and where the child care service is located is

sometimes very large. In those cases, it might be helpful to use family child care where the staff have received special training.

The staff who offer family child care have to be very familiar with the quality required. The service could then be offered for \$8.85 a day, as it is in Quebec, or for \$10 a day elsewhere, on the condition that families be offered that quality of service. It is very obvious that the situation in the rural areas in the Gaspé, in the Lower St. Lawrence or on the North Shore is not at all the same as in a city like Quebec City or Montreal.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Paragraph 7(1)(a) of the bill states a guiding principle for federal investments, which must aim to "facilitate access to early learning and child care programs and services—in particular those that are provided by public and not for profit child care providers—that meet standards set by provincial governments or Indigenous governing bodies."

Do you believe this is the right approach?

**Mr. Pierre Fortin:** Yes. What I like in that wording is the part that says that child care services of any nature are to be subject to provincial standards, especially quality standards.

It has been clearly shown that with more quality, children's development was better and more sustainable in the long term than their vulnerability. The first three or four years of life are extremely important, since children's brains are not finished developing at birth.

When a child doesn't have access to the open window provided by child care services, they remain vulnerable for the rest of their life, and it is very difficult and expensive to remedy that later.

• (1040)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Bérubé.

Madame Gazan, you have six minutes to conclude today's meeting.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much, Chair.

My first very brief question is for Madame Churcher.

I know there have been some concerns raised about not enough support for for-profit care. As you aware, on January 31, the federal government actually allocated 22,500 spaces for for-profit care providers in Alberta.

Did you lobby any federal ministers, government caucus or opposition MPs prior to this announcement being made? If so, whom did you lobby?

**Ms. Krystal Churcher:** We absolutely did lobby all levels, both provincial and federal. We have spoken with Michelle Ferreri multiple times on this issue. We have had our members and our board write letters directly to Minister Gould. I don't know who we may have missed.

The 22,500 spaces were an amazing win for private operators in Alberta. We're definitely very grateful to have those spaces, but they do come with a contingency of opting in to a cost control framework that will be imposed on private businesses—

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Okay.

Because I have very limited time, would you be able to submit the names of those you lobbied to committee for those—

**Ms. Krystal Churcher:** Yes, absolutely.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much.

My next question is for Dr. Mathieu.

Is it pronounced “Mathieu” or more like “Matthew”?

[*Translation*]

**Dr. Sophie Mathieu:** It's the French “Mathieu”.

[*English*]

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I'm trying to be French. I'm practising. I'm glad I got it right.

We know that across Canada and even in this committee, a lot of concern is about labour shortages in this sector being one of the major barriers for expanding child care services to meet the demand. We also know that low wages, precarious work and lack of benefits in the sector make it difficult to recruit and retain qualified staff. I would say research also points to conditions for workers. It points to for-profit child care—not all—as having a record of not respecting liveable wages or good work standards for workers.

What are some examples of programs or policies that the federal government could pursue in collaboration with provinces to address some of these workforce issues and shortages?

**Dr. Sophie Mathieu:** I'm going to draw on Quebec's experience to answer.

We have had work-study programs recently set up by the government. You can go to CEGEP—college—and while you do your study to become an early child care worker, you are also paid to work. After each semester you can get scholarships. You can also be working and have some of your experience recognized.

In Quebec, we had a program in 2020 to recruit 10,000 *préposés aux bénéficiaires*. I'm sorry, I don't know the word in English. It was to recruit people working in long-term care facilities. The program has worked, although not quite 10,000 people remained in their job after the program. There was an initiative by the government to really push to have more people become interested in that profession.

These are some of the initiatives. There's work-study and then it's really about political will, I would say.

• (1045)

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I would agree with you. The NDP has been really pushing hard for liveable wages and benefits for workers. I

mention it often because I'm so proud as a former early childhood educator. I might have stayed in the field and not pursued a teaching career, ending up at the university. I enjoyed it so much, but I wasn't willing to live in poverty, so I left the field as a young woman.

My last question is for you, Mr. Fortin. I know you've done tremendous work in the field and I want to commend you for all of your research and efforts.

Your submission to the committee states that research literature unanimously concluded that quality of childhood was the highest in non-profit CPEs. You also mentioned it again today. It's the lowest in private for-profit centres.

Could you expand on this briefly, and maybe suggest ways in which you believe this legislation could be strengthened to better safeguard affordable, accessible, universal and high-quality child care?

Thank you, Mr. Fortin.

**The Chair:** You have 40 seconds, Mr. Fortin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Fortin:** I'm going to start by not answering your question and suggesting that the indicator to actively follow when it comes to the wages paid to educators in child care services is the ratio between employees of child care services and primary and secondary school teachers published in Statistics Canada's Monthly Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours.

Quebec does a little better than the Canadian average, but not much. Regardless of the province, there is a lot of progress to be made when it comes to training and paying these people.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fortin, and thank you, Ms. Gazan. Our time is now over. With that, is it the pleasure of the committee to adjourn?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Before we do, I want to thank the witnesses for appearing. I did give you a lot of latitude on the timelines, especially to Mr. Fortin and Ms. Churcher, because it was important to hear both sides of the discussion. With that, thank you for participating.

The meeting is adjourned.





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