



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 8 — April 16, 2025

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Todd Goudy
Speaker



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Thirtieth Legislature

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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Lloydminster

[The committee met at 17:31.]

Chair Weger: — Welcome to the Standing Committee on Human Services. My name is Mike Weger. I'll be the Chair. And to my right I have Mr. Barret Kropf, Mr. Kim Gartner, Mr. Kevin Kasun chitting in for Ms. Colleen Young. And on my left I have Ms. April ChiefCalf and Ms. Joan Pratchler. Thank you for attending today, committee.

Today the committee will be considering one bill as well as voting on the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 committed to the committee.

Bill No. 8 — *The Child Care (New Facilities) Amendment Act, 2024/Loi modificative de 2024 sur les garderies d'enfants (nouveaux établissements)*

Clause 1

Chair Weger: — We'll first consider Bill No. 8, *The Child Care (New Facilities) Amendment Act, 2024*, a bilingual bill, beginning with consideration of clause 1, short title.

Minister Hindley is here with officials from the ministry. I would ask that officials please state their name before speaking and please don't touch the microphones. The Hansard operator will turn on your microphone when you are speaking to the committee. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening remarks.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good evening to the committee. We are pleased to be here today. And joining me from the team at the ministry is my chief of staff, Mitch Graw; Clint Repski, deputy minister for Education; Sameema Haque, assistant deputy minister responsible for this portion of the file; Janet Mitchell, executive director of the early years branch; Cindy Jeanes, director, early years; and Rhiannon Shaw, executive director, corporate services.

Today we're here to continue the debate on Bill No. 8, *The Child Care (New Facilities) Amendment Act, 2024*. The proposed amendments to *The Child Care Act, 2014* are necessary to align the legislation with the vision and objectives outlined in the Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement and the Canada-Saskatchewan Bilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement and to implement the strategies required to meet the terms and targets of these two agreements.

Proposed amendments are needed to establish authority for new child care service delivery models to support the expansion target of 28,000 child care spaces by the year 2026. This will allow the ministry to expand the types of regulated services such as providing preschools with the option to be licensed and adjust the maximum number of regulated spaces in group family child care homes.

Additionally, amendments are proposed to define requirements for the collection of personal information to develop and evaluate programs and services. Consequential amendments to *The Child Care Regulations, 2015* will be drafted and will come forward next spring to come into force along with the amendments to the Act.

These amendments were identified through internal review by the Ministry of Education and also through consultations with the regulated child care sector. I'd like to thank the Ministry of Social Services and the early learning and child care sector for their input in these amendments as well. The dedication and interest of our stakeholders in the future of early learning and child care is evident, and it is critical as we continue to transform the sector under the Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

Amendments to the child care licensee manual will also be necessary to specify detailed compliance requirements for child care facilities, ensuring a cohesive framework under the proposed legislative regulatory and policy changes.

And myself and our team here this evening would be happy to try to answer any questions that the committee may have. Thank you.

Chair Weger: — Thank you, Minister. I'll now open the floor for questions.

Joan Pratchler: — Par avant, c'est en anglais ou en français? [Translation: First, is it in English or in French?] Do we do it in French first and then English, or all in English and translation after?

Chair Weger: — We'll just stick with English tonight.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay. Merci. [Translation: Thank you.]

Chair Weger: — Ms. Pratchler, go ahead.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you. Now first question is, if I look at section 3 — where subsection 2, it's going to be amended there — alternative child care service centres. What type of services do you envision that would fall under that alternative child care centre? It seems to be, well, obviously a new definition. What do you envision that as being?

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thanks for the question. A very good question around the alternative child care service centre. So essentially under the Act, the formal definition is that it allows for other types of child care services to be provided. The intent is to have these alternate services to be defined in regulations and approved by the minister.

I think just in talking to the team — and not just even here tonight, but previously — I've tried to understand kind of where we're trying to get to with that is . . . Particularly I think the example is given — and Sammi might want to talk about this a bit more as well — but particularly in rural communities as an example where, I think, through some of the consultations, some of the feedback that we heard was that you'll have a rural community that perhaps has a home-based daycare, and it might be the only child care option in that community. And if that operator decides to get out of child care or they move, there goes the daycare facility — or option, I guess; facility's probably not the right word — but the daycare for that particular community.

So it might be a community, however, where they're looking for something that's a little bit more robust, bigger than a home-

based child care but not to the extent of, you know, what a larger community might have in terms of an actual centre that has dozens and dozens of child care spaces.

So the intention is to try to find something that's kind of in the middle and allow for some flexibility to be able to do that so there's something a bit more than a home-based child care provider available in that community, but something . . . You know, again the community might not require a full-sized, for lack of a better term, larger facility that you might see in Regina or Saskatoon or something like that.

Sameema, anything else you'd add just to that option?

Sameema Haque: — Good evening, everyone. Sameema Haque, assistant deputy minister at Ministry of Education. And so you know, as the minister has elaborated, we are building a sector, and we're building a new sector pretty fast under these child care agreements. So that requires us to be flexible to not only meet the parent need but also meet the community needs as well. And in our discussions with the stakeholders, we are looking for made-in-Saskatchewan solutions, solutions that fit our population base, fit our geographic dispersion.

So this particular initiative isn't well-defined. It'll be well-defined as we work on the regulations and we provide more clarity on what this exactly is going to look like. But the vision is what we can talk about, and the vision for this is basically two-pronged.

One is looking at the size, so when we look at the size of spaces, a child care operator that is somewhere in between a group home and a full centre. So a rural community with a few thousand in population may not need a 90-space centre, but they might need something bigger than a group home. So we're looking at what is it that we can create that is a size somewhere in the middle that we can look at, so from a size perspective.

And then from a governance perspective, looking at some flexibility in regards to if a home provider leaves the community, what options are there. So our municipal sector has certainly . . . we've engaged with them, and they've expressed interest in becoming an operator of child care spaces where there is space available. So we are looking at those options as well.

So as we proceed with developing regulations, the clause is intended — the vision behind it — it's intended to provide us flexibility to explore those new models so we can expand spaces, and especially spaces in rural and remote communities that certainly don't need big centres but could use child care. And so those parents are also able to benefit from \$10-a-day child care.

Joan Pratchler: — So what currently in the Act would limit that now?

[17:45]

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Yeah, so just around that particular issue, I think what we were trying to address is providing some flexibility in that size, you know, with respect to providing transparency and clarity for the sector. There's very defined parameters for a larger child care centre in terms of what's required from a staffing perspective, you know, the regulations

you have to meet. And that's different than what is in place for a home-based child care operator.

So we're trying to provide some transparency, and just talking to the officials here through some of the consultation, it was identified as a bit of a barrier. Some of these smaller communities that are . . . You know, they want to do the right thing. They want to be able to have a child care option in their community, but they need more than just a home-based provider. They're looking for more spaces than that. But again, they're not looking for a massive child care facility. So it was identified as a bit of a barrier to try to find something in kind of a middle ground there that would address that, I guess, specific ask in that community.

And I think, you know, operators and municipalities as well were looking and are looking for . . . They want to make sure that they're playing by the rules, that they are abiding by the regulations. And they have some clarity from government as to what they can do, what they can't do. And that's, you know, that's a priority in this particular sector. So I think that's what we're trying to achieve with that is just to have a bit more definition around kind of this middle-ground option for child care delivery in smaller communities. Am I missing anything on that, Sameema?

Sameema Haque: — No, Minister, you've addressed it. Essentially, like we're looking at a model in between in regards to, in our regulatory requirement, a combination of the regulations that exist for the current centre spaces versus what exists for group homes and what would work well in a middle setting.

And that's something that needs to be explored with our stakeholders. Certainly their voice is really important. As we develop those regulations, we will ensure that their voice is considered in that, in developing those regulations and defining it further. Clarity and transparency is really important. And in our federal-provincial agreement, we certainly have to answer to what is it that we're doing and what are the criteria and how those options are being developed, what are the responsibilities being placed on operators?

So the more clarity and definition that we have, the better it is for the operators getting into the market as well as those that, you know, we have an accountability to answer to under our federal-provincial obligations. So while there might not be any impediment in our current agreement to kind of look at potential exemptions and variances from the routine processes that exist in centres and group homes, the fact that we are defining it through an alternate model would provide further clarity and transparency for all sides.

Joan Pratchler: — So when I read the child care Act, the federal one, I couldn't find anything in there that said what the minimum size could be or the maximum size. So has that changed?

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Yeah, so it's not a federal requirement. That would be under provincial jurisdiction. So that's where that falls. I think, again, just to some of our previous answers, it does speak to some of the transparency. And I think Ms. Haque spoke to it well around when we're having these conversations with our federal counterparts and they're, you know, seeking updates in terms of how we're making out in terms

of achieving our targets to expand 28,000 spaces in our province. These are some of the things that they're looking at, and I think it would help for us to be able to provide, you know, some clear answers and some transparency to them on what's being done.

And I think, you know, just in addition to what I said earlier around some of the feedback that we've had from the sector . . . and there was, you know, a significant number of stakeholders that were consulted and either attended an in-person session or responded in writing to us. But just as an example — and it's a little bit different in every province of course — but I met with some operators yesterday. I had a meeting yesterday morning with one of the groups that represents a number of child care facilities and operators around the province, and they had in . . . and you know, very well versed in this area, and having kind of had a bit of a snapshot, lay of the land if you will, of what's happening in other provinces and territories in Canada.

And they did speak to, you know, how they've seen that Saskatchewan has done well by adding as many spaces as we have thus far. I think we've hit about 75 per cent of our target that we're trying to achieve as per the agreement with the federal government. And the operators that I talked to yesterday, you know, they were grateful for that. They said they recognize that we have been more successful in adding more spaces here in Saskatchewan compared to some other provinces.

That being said, we're trying to hit that target. And we've been able to work pretty collaboratively with the sector thus far, knowing of course that there's some challenges there, as we've talked about.

But I think, again, this is kind of the next step for us to be able to say, you know, what else can we do to help provide a bit of a space there, to add more of these child care spaces in perhaps communities that haven't been able to add spaces thus far for some of the reasons that we've discussed here this evening?

How do we address that? How do we provide some clarity for them around what we can do to kind of hit that middle road for adding more child care spaces, whether it's, you know, in between the group model, the larger child care facility model, and the home-based model? But yeah, and I think it's something we want to try to make sure that we're doing and so that we're going to hit that target that has been provided to us.

Joan Pratchler: — I've heard now a couple times, you know, the issue of being transparent. What are the current issues with being transparent now?

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Yeah, there's not been any issues that have been identified now just with respect to transparency. I think all we're just trying to . . . we just want to ensure that as, you know . . . if we do come up with a new model, that it's well-defined. That it's very clearly defined in terms of the parameters, so that those in the sector know what this model is and perhaps what it isn't. But that's what we mean by transparency. We just want to be able to provide that clarity to the sector. Again I think that speaks a little bit to just one of the issues that's been identified with us, just the way that it's set out right now.

But if we're able to come up with this model that kind of fits in the middle, that there is clarity so that there isn't . . . It kind of

takes the guesswork out of it so that if somebody, an operator or a community, a municipality sees a path forward here, that it's clear to them on how they can achieve it and there's, you know, there's no ambiguity in terms of what the regulations are for a new model.

Joan Pratchler: — So do I hear you saying you're setting up a structure for small, medium, and large and having them all-inclusive under the same regulations?

Sameema Haque: — So like that's a great question. I would say in response that we haven't defined everything yet. This amendment allows us the opportunity to explore what it could be. It could be small and large. It could be medium and large. It could be small and smaller. It could be whatever the community needs. We do want to have all kinds of flexible options there that could address the needs of the parents and the community.

To develop a sector and to develop this number of spaces this quickly requires that flexibility, requires innovation, requires us to be open to all kinds of different approaches. So that's what we want to explore. That's why we are not defining it in this one. We are looking at . . . Like we've really been very careful in how we've consulted with the sector, and call it an alternative, alternative to the existing three that we have, which is home, a group home, and a centre.

What else is needed for us to be able to serve our communities and our parents is something to be explored. And it could be based on size. It could be based on other needs as identified through our regulatory work.

But we do want to ensure that whichever model that we end up with through our assessment and through our consultation is very well-defined, and in our regulations there is clear requirements that are available for operators and for our parents . . . what it looks like.

Joan Pratchler: — And so we know that there's very good oversight . . . well there's oversight over home-based. And we have pretty clear rules about oversight over centres. This new entity in the middle, what kind of oversight would be available for that?

[18:00]

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Just answer a couple of things, then I'll turn it over to Sameema. But great question. I think first off we want to ensure that oversight's a priority. There's not any sort of dilution of the oversight, like that is you know, paramount in the sector. And we know that that happens in, whether it's a home-based daycare or it's a group home or a centre. So that's number one.

Now outside of that if you look at the governance model, that's a little bit different, right? If you're running just a daycare out of your home, how that operates compared to one that has 90 spaces or a combination of, you know, hundreds of spaces in some of these communities where they have a number of daycares that might be under the same overall operator, it's a different structure.

But whether it's drop-in visits or any sort of oversight, that

remains crucial to this, so that just to be very, very clear that that's a priority for the sector and that will not change. And that's something that of course has been discussed and is very critical to what we're doing here.

But Sameema, did you want to talk perhaps a bit about what there is for oversight now and how it kind of varies between the different types of facilities and homes, and perhaps expand upon anything I might have missed?

Sameema Haque: — Thank you, Minister. So as you mentioned, Ms. Pratchler, that the oversight requirements are very well-defined. And this is exactly the intention with this, that we define the oversight requirements and any other requirements through our regulations for those new types of child care operators.

We don't want a presumption from the operator that the group home requirements apply to them or the centre apply to them. We want to explore options as to, you know, what is needed and then build a model around that and then define that in the regulations and have clarity for operators in regards to what those requirements are.

The requirements like, you know, as you mentioned, you are well aware of those as well. These are site visits. These are, you know, drop-in visits, unannounced, announced, attending both meetings. We do all kinds of follow-up with the operators and we anticipate to continue to do that. But whatever it looks like into the future, it would have to be explored with those models. And then we want to ensure that that's well-defined in our regulations.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — I forgot to mention as well, I think it's important to note as well that the child/caregiver ratio would not change. And you probably had a subsequent question coming on that, and I just forgot to mention that. But that's also, I think, important to mention, that that ratio would stay the same.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay, good. Yes. As a principal, ratios matter. As a nurse, ratios matter. Okay. Let's see if we can't slip on down to the next part, section — let's see what it is here — (e): the definition of a "group family child care home," and changing it from 12 to 16. Section (e) on my paper here. Can you give me just maybe a couple of the evidence-based research that was used to choose that number 16?

Hon. Everett Hindley: — So we heard about that in the consultations we had with the sector, that there were some that were asking for it.

The reasoning around the number is just around the existing ratio. So the existing ratio is that one adult is allowed to care for up to eight children at one time in a family child care home, and two adults are allowed . . . sorry, I'll back up. One adult is allowed to care for up to eight children at one time in a family child care home. And now with the current limit being of 12, they'd obviously have to have additional staff because they're above the eight, right? If they're in that 9 to 12, they already have the staff in place.

So with the existing ratio, which I said earlier we're not changing that, so they already have the staff in place. And if we expand it up to 16 they would still fall within the same ratio without having

to make any changes there.

I think what's important to note, though, is that — and I know I've heard this and actually discussed it with some of the child care operators that I've met with who've asked the question about it as well — it's that they have to have the staff, of course, but they also have to have the space. And they have to continue to meet the, you know, the requirements and everything set forth in terms of what they need to do.

So there would not be any, you know, I think anything to be concerned of from that perspective. Again it would be on an operator-by-operator basis, but if they have the space available, and in some cases I think what I've heard is that they do. You know, you'd have operators that aren't operating in a home-based model and so they do have a . . . I don't know if a facility is the right term. Whenever I say facility I think of something bigger. But they have perhaps the room for 16 but the way the Act is currently structured they're limited at the 12. That's the reasoning behind the increase.

Joan Pratchler: — So if a family home would have 13 children, they would necessarily now have to have two staff members, is that right? Because it goes one over? Is that how that ratio would work then?

Sameema Haque: — So this particular amendment flows from, you know, a lot of feedback from stakeholders. With the new space development grants and the capital grants that we've been able to provide to the operators, many of the group home operators have bought a separate home adjacent to often their residence or connected to their residence, and they are running a group home, child care home. And so with that comes expenses, mortgage, and all those things.

So they have space, and as soon as they go over eight, the number eight for their spaces, they have to have two staff. So they have the staff under the number 12 — like the current existing conditions they have the staff — they have two staff members. They have the space. They have added the expense of having more space but they are not able to maximize their space and their staffing because the ratio, the current ratio, only allowed them to have 12 spaces.

Now if the spaces go up to 16 then they can use all the space that they have. If they have the space they can maximize based on the ratio for their staff, the expenses for the staff. They can maximize the number of children that they can care for by going to 16, maintaining the same ratio and you know, they can also maximize the funding that they get from the ministry because it's on a per-space basis that they would get the fee reduction grant.

So all of this would actually lead to a more stable and a viable group home because now they have space and that's fully utilized. They have staff that they always had to hire and they are fully utilized and the current ratio is maintained. And they're maximizing their grant and funding from the ministry in the form of a per-space grant, fee reduction grant which is always going to support them.

So this is, from that perspective, from what we've heard from the stakeholders, as long as there is space — and we would be monitoring that through our other oversight activities — this is

actually a win-win for the sector and for the parents as well.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay. Happy to hear that. I wanted to . . . I guess this would encapsulate section 4 maybe more broadly. What do you see as the key criteria for obtaining licences in terms of application requirements, what prerequisites they have to have before they can obtain a licence? And what kind of oversight can they expect of their operation in terms of inspections and assessments and things of that nature?

[18:15]

Cindy Jeanes: — Hello. Cindy Jeanes, director of early learning and workforce in the early years branch. So when we look at the licensing requirements currently, there are some common elements for child care homes and for child care centres. And so some of those would include things such as looking at the usable floor space, looking at the program, looking at the staff-to-child ratios, looking at training requirements, looking at requirements around nutrition. And so some of those that are common now would likely apply to a new service model, and some would still need to be developed, depending on what that model looked like.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay. And so there would be oversight for those as well?

Cindy Jeanes: — Yes, I think the minister had referred to that.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Yeah, I think just further to what Cindy said, certainly the oversight, you know, that's critical for this, and the same would go around the licensing. So as Cindy said, there's a little bit different, as I understand it, licensing requirements for a home-based daycare versus a larger centre. As we define and develop this sort of middle ground piece, we want to take the elements of both of those and kind of best fit that sector. But you know, certainly would continue to make sure that we do have fairly robust and strong, both oversight but also the licensing requirements as well.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay, thank you. I look in this subsection (2) there: "Subject to the other provisions," blah blah blah, "without a licence." So someone could run a family child care home and a preschool with no licence. Is that correct?

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Yeah, licensing, so group home licensing is mandatory. Centre licensing is mandatory. In the home front it's optional. It could be licensed, can be unlicensed, but there's different provisions there in terms of accessibility to grant funding and that sort of a thing.

Joan Pratchler: — And what about preschool? They can be licensed or unlicensed. I see both of those in this Act.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Yeah, on the preschool level it's optional.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay, and then it says in section (7) . . . It's section (7). It says, "No person shall provide child care services to more than the prescribed number of children at any one time in a licensed preschool." So my question is, what would be the prescribed number of children in a licensed preschool?

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Still to be determined as we work

through just in consultation with the stakeholders and develop, you know, what it looks like in that space. But Sameema, maybe talk a bit more about kind of what's happening there right now.

Sameema Haque: — So currently the preschools are exempt from our regulations. We don't have jurisdiction over them. What we're proposing over here with these amendments is they'd become one of our alternate service delivery providers. Since they are private businesses we would give them an option to become licensed.

Should they become a licensed provider in our alternate service delivery model, then we would prescribe in our regulations the requirements for them. And they would have to be determined through our regulatory development process in consultation with the preschool sector and other stakeholders.

Some of the drivers for the requirements will be, of course, like any other operator — the size, the physical size, the number of children accessing services, the staffing ratio. So all of those things are still important and we would consider those as we develop requirements for them.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay. And if we just go down a little bit lower, section 7 is amended to section 5, subsection (1). And it says other facilities, "unlicensed preschool." So what would be the numbers that could be in an unlicensed preschool?

Sameema Haque: — They are outside of our jurisdiction right now. So unless they come into our jurisdiction and become a licensed preschool provider, there is no jurisdiction we have on them.

Joan Pratchler: — So nobody provides oversight to preschools that are taking care of children. Can that be?

Sameema Haque: — In our current model, they are not in our jurisdiction.

Joan Pratchler: — But when will they be? When will they be?

Sameema Haque: — We are attempting to do that through this amendment, to bring them into the licensee structure.

Joan Pratchler: — So do I hear you saying that we will not have any more unlicensed preschools? They will all be licensed now under this Act? Not quite how I read it, but . . .

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Sorry, I just had to seek some clarity here. So they aren't licensed, but there are minimum provisions in the Act, as I understand. I don't know if you want to speak any more but maybe, Cindy, maybe just give a bit of an explanation of what's currently in place for preschools.

[18:30]

Cindy Jeanes: — Sure. So in our child care regulations we have certain services that are exempt from our legislation. One of those would be services where they provide care for children less than three hours a day and for children that are of preschool age. So preschools would fall into that category if they are operating and they have a group of two-and-a-half- to five-year-olds coming in the morning for three hours a day, a group of different

two-and-a-half- to five-year-old children coming in the afternoon, then they're exempt from our legislation.

If we received a call indicating that they had, you know, infants in attendance or they were operating for four hours a day, we would let them know about the exemption in *The Child Care Regulations*, what the requirements are to comply with that, and you know, offer some solutions to that.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay, yeah. Because the question I have next is, what problems are being created by not having any limits on enrolment and no oversight in unlicensed preschool? As a principal I can think of 10 right now.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thanks. Just conferring with the officials just for some history in the sector when it comes to preschool. My understanding, that we've had preschool-operating operators for some time, for decades. My understanding is it's, you know, with very few limited incidences. Whenever there has been one that's been brought to our attention, our team, our official's been able to work with them and come up with a solution.

So I think that, you know, I would say we'd want to continue to do that — of course monitor it closely and make sure that it continues to operate that way. But that's historically my understanding how that's been dealt with in that portion of the sector.

Joan Pratchler: — Yeah. And that's a question mark I have as an administrator. I've had several preschools operating in my schools, and there are no parameters around there. The only parameters I can see under this Act is that you have parent oversight. They either have to have a board of directors or they can have a parent committee. And I've seen some amazing fights in that room downstairs because there were no parameters set around that. So that's really important to have that, whatever those regulations would be.

And maybe it's the same numbers as you have for your others, but that is . . . yeah. There should be something there for that. And especially for licensed . . . well for all of them. I mean, how can you have unlicensed care for children? That just makes me nervous in this day and age. It really does.

So I don't know if that's in the plans or that's an amendment or something that could be considered. We've got regulations for everything else. They're typically in schools. Well as much as they can be, I guess. Yeah.

And the other question I have regarding those kind of parameters around preschools: would you say that those same type of parameters would be in place for les immersions, for the French schools as well? Because we know those ratios are always a lot smaller in our French immersion schools and French immersion preschools. Or do you see that those numbers would be the same as English and in French?

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Yeah, the team tells me that there's no different ratios or anything different between the French and the English.

Joan Pratchler: — You would be seen as a very wise man if you

consulted with them and even asked them, because I think they would really appreciate that. Because when you have a second language, regardless of what it is, if you can have smaller ratios or parameters around that it really, really makes a difference — and would be a good outreach for the French community as well, because often people don't think of that. But there are quite a few French immersion preschools.

All right, I was wondering if we could sort of end off looking at section . . . Well, it's section 7. Well, it's actually 10 now, 10.1 and:

(3) The minister may exempt a licensee from the requirements of subsection (1) or (2), as the case may be, if the minister is of the opinion that:

(a) compliance with subsection (1) or (2) would cause an undue hardship . . . [or]

(b) granting the exemption [which] would not be contrary to the public interest”.

It's on the bottom of page 10 in our amended.

And my question around that is, would you be able to give me, I don't know, two, three examples of what an undue hardship, what that would look like or sound like? And also the same thing, what would three examples of contrary to public interest mean under that?

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thanks for the question. Hearing — just conferring with the team — that there haven't been a lot of exemptions, I don't think, granted historically. The one example and probably the most common one and the only one that's coming to mind right now is in the case of what's called a teen student support centre, where they might not have a parent advisory board, I think, or committee. I stand to be corrected here by Cindy. But just maybe if you want to speak a bit more about kind of those specific circumstances and why we need to allow for an exemption in those particular cases.

Cindy Jeanes: — So our teen student support centres would be primarily caring for children of teen parents. Those parents would all be under the age of 18 or typically under the age of 18, so to have a parent board when they can't take on that legal liability just doesn't really make sense, and a parent advisory committee may not as well.

So those centres would look at other ways of gathering parent involvement. And so they would meet with them, they would talk about the program and stuff, but they wouldn't have a parent board or a parent advisory committee simply because of the age of the parents.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay. Thank you. That makes obviously good sense, and we have a couple here in Regina already like that. What would be some examples of contrary to public interest?

[18:45]

Hon. Everett Hindley: — It mirrors the language that's been used in other sections for other parts of the sector there. Just chatting with the officials here, to our recollection hasn't been used, not that we're aware of anyways. We can obviously go

back further in the ministry and dig further into it, but I just . . . Talking to the folks here around the table, we're not aware of it being used before, previously.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay. When I look at page 10 at the top, it says “for the purposes of . . . if a person is a shareholder of a corporation . . .” And so when I also compare the child care, federal child care agreement, it's explicit that this is not-for-profit child care. But it looks like this Act has something involved for that. I assume that people that have a private child care wouldn't be able to access the \$10-a-day then?

Sameema Haque: — We do have a very small for-profit sector. And that exists within the province. But they are not eligible for \$10-a-day under the federal-provincial agreement. So they would not be eligible for a parent fee reduction grant.

Joan Pratchler: — So when I go back to some of our earlier conversations this evening, that new entity, that kind of in between the child care home and the bigger centres, this new entity would fall under that as well then?

Sameema Haque: — So anybody who wishes to access \$10-a-day child care would have to be — under the current federal-provincial agreement conditions — would have to be not-for-profit.

Joan Pratchler: — Right.

Sameema Haque: — But for-profit still can seek a licence if they want to operate within the province, so they are a regulated entity.

Joan Pratchler: — Right. And there's only about two or three of them anyway. There's not very many. So going forward after March 2026, this Act will take place and that opens the door for having more. Is that what you're saying?

Sameema Haque: — If anybody, like even in current situations, right, if there is an operator that wants to be licensed at a for-profit centre, the Act doesn't prohibit that. They just won't have access to \$10-a-day. That is limited to only not-for-profit under the federal-provincial agreement.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay. And so just to make sure I can understand in my head, moving forward when the agreement is signed come whenever — I mean, it's going to come into place next year sometime — do you understand that that's going to just continue, that same process is just going to continue?

Sameema Haque: — We can't presuppose the terms of the new agreement. That would be presumptuous of me to say what's going to be in the new agreement. However if the future agreement mirrors the existing agreement, then any for-profit sector would not be eligible to the funding under the federal-provincial agreement.

Joan Pratchler: — Okay. And so is this Act sort of dovetailing that we are going to open up to for-profit then, come next signing? Or that's going to be one of the negotiating items?

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thanks for the question. And I think, you know, you referenced it as well in the preamble that they're

. . . Largely the sector is not-for-profit. Like there is a very small number that are in the for-profit space when it comes to the child care. I don't anticipate that changing. I just don't, based on, you know, my experience and the time in the file, the operators that I've met with. I haven't seen that push.

Again some of the, you know, what we want to just at the broader . . . What we want to be able to discuss with the federal government is provisions that are happening in other jurisdictions, other provinces. Would that be, you know, a sticking point for us? I don't think it would be.

I just, again, I think we're . . . You know, the one example I've given as well in addition to that — and again, it's just an example — but you know, the other one I've given is around the age limit, what Manitoba has and we don't have. But I just don't think that . . . Again, I do not anticipate a massive shift. I think that the child care centre that's been established in this province, again, it's largely not-for-profit. I think there's obviously reasons for that, and I don't anticipate that changing.

Joan Pratchler: — Yeah, and they've been well-established for decades.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Certainly. Yeah, exactly. Obviously the member would know that. I met with a group of them on Friday, some of them that have been in operation for 50 and 60 years. In small communities too, not even just, you know, like a city where I live in Swift Current, but places like Cabri and Abbey. And they've got a ton of experience, and they obviously know what they're doing.

Joan Pratchler: — Yeah. Yeah. Good. Well I just want to say thank you to the minister and all the officials that helped with this. Thank you very much. It was a good evening. And thank you to Chair and Hansard, officials — and I appreciate your work — and my fellow colleagues.

Chair Weger: — All right. Seeing no further questions, we'll proceed to vote on the clauses. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 10 inclusive agreed to.]

Chair Weger: — His Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Child Care (New Facilities) Amendment Act, 2024*, a bilingual bill.

I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 8, *The Child Care (New Facilities) Amendment Act, 2024*, a bilingual bill without amendment. MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Gartner moves. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Minister, do you have any closing comments?

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. Just again thanks to the committee members tonight for your questions, very much appreciated. Thank you. And no doubt something that I think is pretty close to all of us in terms of this part of the education sector, so thank you for your thoughtful and respectful questions.

And of course to the rest of the committee members, thank you as well. And to the team at the ministry that have joined us here this evening, lots of experience in the child care sector, as we've talked about, from the operator's front but certainly also in the ministry as well. And a lot of expertise and history that I can count on and kind of lean on a little bit for some historical background, trying to make sure that we're doing the best thing we possibly can for the sector — families and parents and the kids, and the child care operators, and the staff as well, the ECEs [early childhood educator] and everybody that is part of the sector.

[19:00]

Thanks, everyone, for your time and dedication to the sector here, not just tonight but to each and every day. So thank you.

Chair Weger: — Thank you. And MLA Pratchler, any closing comments?

Joan Pratchler: — Thanking all the officials here. It's not an easy job. After all these weeks we're all getting a little tired, aren't we? Anyway, thank you.

Chair Weger: — Okay, thank you. Thank you, Minister Hindley, and thank you to all of your officials. You folks are now free to go. The committee, we will stay.

We will now proceed to vote on the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 committed to this committee.

**General Revenue Fund
Advanced Education
Vote 37**

Chair Weger: — Vote 37, Advanced Education, page 23. Central management and services, subvote (AE01) in the amount of \$17,678,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Post-secondary education, subvote (AE02) in the amount of \$721,939,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Student supports, subvote (AE03) in the amount of \$48,414,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of zero dollars. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Advanced Education, vote 37 — \$788,031,000. I will now ask a

member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Advanced Education in the amount of \$788,031,000.

Kevin Kasun: — I so move.

Chair Weger: — MLA Kasun has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Education
Vote 5**

Chair Weger: — Vote 5, Education, page 35. Central management and services, subvote (ED01) in the amount of \$14,050,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. K-12 education, subvote (ED03) in the amount of \$2,613,297,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Teachers' pensions and benefits, subvote (ED04) in the amount of \$24,181,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Early years, subvote (ED08) in the amount of \$413,259,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Provincial library and literacy, subvote (ED15) in the amount of \$15,869,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

Education, vote 5 — \$3,080,656,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there will be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Education in the amount of \$3,080,656,000.

MLA Kropf has so moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Health
Vote 32**

Chair Weger: — Vote 32, Health, page 67. Central management and services, subvote (HE01) in the amount of \$9,622,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Saskatchewan health services, subvote (HE03) in the amount of \$5,915,828,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Provincial health services and support, subvote (HE04) in the amount of \$346,358,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Medical services and medical education programs, subvote (HE06) in the amount of \$1,274,269,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Drug plan and extended benefits, subvote (HE08) in the amount of \$533,526,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$1,989,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for information purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Health, vote 32 — \$8,079,603,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Health in the amount of \$8,079,603,000.

MLA Gartner has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Vote 20**

Chair Weger: — Vote 20, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, page 87. Central management and services, subvote (LR01) in the amount of \$5,089,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Occupational health and safety, subvote (LR02) in the amount of \$10,537,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Employment standards, subvote (LR03) in the amount of \$3,222,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Labour Relations Board, subvote (LR04) in the amount of \$1,079,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Labour relations and mediation, subvote (LR05) in the amount of \$730,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Injured worker appeal services, subvote (LR06) in the amount of \$1,037,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$92,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, vote 20 — \$21,694,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Labour Relations and Workplace Safety in the amount of \$21,694,000.

MLA Kasun has so moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Social Services
Vote 36**

Chair Weger: — Vote 36, Social Services, page 109. Central management and services, subvote (SS01) in the amount of \$61,739,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Income assistance services, subvote (SS03) in the amount of \$695,394,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Child and family services, subvote (SS04) in the amount of \$408,415,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Client support, subvote (SS05) in the amount of \$14,475,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Housing, subvote (SS12) in the

amount of \$73,747,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Disability programs and services, subvote (SS14) in the amount of \$363,809,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$5,409,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Social Services, vote 36 — \$1,617,579,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Social Services in the amount of \$1,617,579,000.

MLA Kropf has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Lending and Investing Activities
Advanced Education
Vote 169**

Chair Weger: — Vote 169, Advanced Education, page 147. Loans to Student Aid Fund, subvote (AE01) in the amount of \$80,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

Advanced Education, vote 169 — \$80,000,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, the following sums for Advanced Education in the amount of \$80,000,000.

MLA Gartner has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Advanced Education
Vote 37**

Chair Weger: — Supplementary estimates no. 2, 2024-25. Vote 37, Advanced Education, page 11. Post-secondary education, subvote (AE02) in the amount of \$26,433,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

Advanced Education, vote 37 — \$26,433,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Advanced Education in the amount of \$26,433,000.

Kevin Kasun: — I so move.

Chair Weger: — MLA Kasun has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Education
Vote 5**

Chair Weger: — Vote 5, Education, page 12. K-12 education, subvote (ED03) in the amount of \$54,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Teachers' pensions and benefits, subvote (ED04) in the amount of \$11,768,000. There is no vote as this is statutory.

Education, vote 5 — \$54,000,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Education in the amount of \$54,000,000.

MLA Gartner has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Health
Vote 32**

Chair Weger: — Vote 32, Health, page 15. Saskatchewan health services, subvote (HE03) in the amount of \$399,500,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Provincial health services and support, subvote (HE04) in the amount of \$17,800,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Medical services and medical education programs, subvote (HE06) in the amount of

\$85,600,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

Health, vote 32 — \$502,900,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Health in the amount of \$502,900,000.

MLA Kropf has so moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Vote 20**

Chair Weger: — Vote 20, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, page 18. Central management and services, subvote (LR01) in the amount of \$140,000, is that agreed?

[19:15]

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Occupational health and safety, subvote (LR02) in the amount of \$750,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Employment standards, subvote (LR03) in the amount of \$350,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Labour Relations Board, subvote (LR04) in the amount of \$50,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Labour relations and mediation, subvote (LR05) in the amount of \$50,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Injured worker appeal services, subvote (LR06) in the amount of \$60,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, vote 20 — \$1,400,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for

Labour Relations and Workplace Safety in the amount of \$1,400,000.

Kevin Kasun: — I so move.

Chair Weger: — MLA Kasun has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Social Services
Vote 36**

Chair Weger: — Vote 36, Social Services, page 19. Central management and services, subvote (SS01) in the amount of \$1,800,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Income assistance services, subvote (SS03) in the amount of \$6,600,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Child and family services, subvote (SS04) in the amount of \$36,900,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Client support, subvote (SS05) in the amount of \$1,200,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Housing, subvote (SS12) in the amount of \$600,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Disability programs and services, subvote (SS14) in the amount of \$2,900,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried.

Social Services, vote 36 — \$50,000,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Social Services in the amount of \$50,000,000.

MLA Gartner has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. Committee members, you have before you a draft of the first report of the Standing Committee on Human Services for the thirtieth legislature. We require a

member to move the following motion:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Human Services for the thirtieth legislature be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

MLA Gartner has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. That concludes our business for today. I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment. MLA Kropf has moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair Weger: — Carried. This committee stands adjourned to the call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 19:19.]