

Fifth Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Social and Economic Development

Chairperson
Mr. Dave Gaudreau
Constituency of St. Norbert

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Fortieth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Wednesday, February 17, 2016

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Dave Gaudreau
(St. Norbert)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Matt Wiebe
(Concordia)

ATTENDANCE – 10 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mr. Allum, Hon. Ms. Crothers, Hon. Mr. Nevakshonoff, Hon. Ms. Wight

Messrs. Ewasko, Gaudreau, Martin, Pedersen, Rondeau, Wiebe

APPEARING:

Hon. Jon Gerrard, MLA for River Heights

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Bill 2–The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Small Classes for K to 3)

Mr. Norm Gould, Manitoba Teachers' Society

Ms. Barbara Cerilli, private citizen

Ms. Tracey Wylie, private citizen

Ms. Deenie Lefko-Halas, private citizen

Ms. Maggie Cox, Parent Council, Greenway School

Mr. Joe Halas, private citizen

Bill 7–The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Protecting Child Care Space in Schools)

Mr. Josh Watt, Manitoba School Boards Association

Ms. Pat Wege, Manitoba Child Care Association

Ms. Kim Perring, On The Move Inc.

Ms. Brianne Goertzen, private citizen

Ms. Susan Prentice, private citizen

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Bill 2–The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Small Classes for K to 3)

Rachelle Ladd, private citizen

Bill 7–The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Protecting Child Care Space in Schools)

David Hay, Sugar-N-Spice Kiddie Haven Inc.

Mihaela Mujcinovic, private citizen

Lori Schroen, CUPE Local 1543

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 2–The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Small Classes for K to 3)

Bill 7–The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Protecting Child Care Space in Schools)

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Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development please come to order.

Our first item of business is the election of a Chairperson.

Are there any nominations for this position?

Hon. Deanne Crothers (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): I nominate Dave Gaudreau.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Dave Gaudreau. Any other nominations?

Mr. Gaudreau has been nominated.

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Gaudreau, will you please take the Chair.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Chairperson: Good evening. This evening—this meeting has been called to order—consider the following bills: Bill 2, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Small Class Sizes for K to 3); Bill 7, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools).

I'd like to remind that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet again, if necessary, on Monday, February 22nd, and Tuesday, February 23, at 6 p.m. to discuss—to continue consideration of the bills on tonight's agenda.

How late does the committee wish to sit this evening?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I think we'll sit 'til the work of the committee is complete.

Mr. Chairperson: Is that agreed? We'll sit 'til the committee's—work of the committee? *[Agreed]*

We have a number of presenters registered to speak tonight as noted on the list before you.

So Norm Gould on—has asked to be removed from the presenters on Bill 7 and have—and Barbara Cerilli is also—been asked to remove—be removed.

Another person registered to speak on Bill 2, Joe Halas, and a correction, Joe Watt is not an out-of-towner. *[interjection]* Or sorry, Josh Watt is not an out-of-towner.

Written submissions have been—from the following persons have been received and distributed to the committee members: Dave Hay, Sugar-N-Spice Kiddie Haven Inc., on Bill 7; Mihaela Mujcinovic, on Bill 7; Rachel Ladd—or Rachelle Ladd, on Bill 2; Lori Schroen, CUPE Local 1543, on Bill 7.

Does the committee agree to receive these documents and have them appear in the Hansard of this meeting? *[Agreed]*

Before we proceed with the presentations, we do have another number of items and points of information to consider.

First of all, if there's anyone else in the audience who would like to make a presentation this evening, please register with the staff at the entrance of the room.

Also, for all the—information of all the presenters, while written versions of presentations are not required, if you are going to accompany your presentation with written material, we ask that you provide 20 copies. If you need help with the photocopying, please speak with the staff at the back of the room.

As well, in accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes being allowed for questions from the committee members. If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called the second time, they will be removed from the presenters' list.

Prior to proceeding with the presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in committee. The proceedings of our meeting are being recorded in order

to have a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say that person's name. This is a signal for the Hansard people behind me to turn the mics on and off.

Thank you for your patience, and now we will proceed with the presentations.

Bill 2—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Small Classes for K to 3)

Mr. Chairperson: All right. We will now proceed with Bill 2.

Norm Gould, president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society.

Do you have any written materials for the committee tonight?

Mr. Norm Gould (Manitoba Teachers' Society): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. All right. Please proceed when you're ready.

Mr. Gould: I'm just a ball of energy. I don't know where to start. Well, my name's Norm Gould, and I am the president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, and I represent over 15,000 public education teachers across the province of Manitoba.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society is dedicated to safeguarding the welfare of teachers, the status of the teaching profession and the cause of public education in Manitoba. The priority of our members is to provide a quality education, a public education, in Manitoba for over 183,000 public education students. Included among the society's goals is to positively influence educational change and to be recognized as an effective agent of public education so that government will consult and maintain a continuous dialogue with teachers.

It is for this reason that I am pleased to present to you this evening in support of Bill 2, the public schools amendment act. Bill 2 stemmed from a government commitment in 2011 that acknowledged the evidence that a student's success in life is directly connected to his or her access to quality education in the early years and that the most effective way to create greater access to quality education is to reduce class sizes from K to 3.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society was honoured to sit on the oversight committee that comprised of educational partners all across the spectrum: Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, Manitoba

School Boards Association, Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, and Manitoba Association of School Business Officials and Manitoba Education. And I can't say enough about the work that the staff does at Manitoba Education. They do yeoman's work, and they should be recognized for what they do on a daily basis on behalf of the students within the province of Manitoba.

In June 12th, the oversight committee presented a number of recommendations to the government that included the following criteria. And remember, this is a product of the oversight committee that represented all the stakeholders in education, that 90 per cent of the K-to-3 classrooms within a school division will be required to be capped compliant by having 20 or fewer students. Ten per cent would recognize that there is fluctuations in the needs of school divisions and certainly was respectful and responsive to the needs of school divisions and no so restrictive but certainly recognizing the importance. And those grade 3 classrooms which are split with a higher grade must be capped at 23 students. This was evidence-based decision making, certainly from the experience that took place in Ontario, and this was put in place here in the province of Manitoba, and it was really very well thought out.

Whether you talk to teachers in Thompson, Cranberry-Portage, Brandon or Winnipeg, the ideal classroom environment is one where their students have the opportunities they need to learn and grow. These opportunities begin with great one-on-one time that can only be achieved by limiting the number of students in a classroom.

*(18:10)

As president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, and as a teacher, I know that class size continues to be a main cause of stress on teachers. This is not only due to the increased workload created by larger class sizes, but rather the frustration in knowing there are students who are not getting the attention that they deserve.

Like the rest of the country, the face of Manitoba is evolving, and so are Manitoba's classrooms. We are richer as a society thanks to the arrival of so many new Canadians over the past couple of decades and, more recently, the Syrian refugees. However, as a consequence of this, our classrooms are more complex than ever before.

Recent membership polling suggests that this is a concern that continues to grow over the years, and continues to be a top priority of Manitoba teachers. And this is resonated with our polling that we've conducted in the fall with parents and with our members, that this continues to be a top priority in meeting the needs of the students and recognizing the complexity of classrooms in the province of Manitoba.

Also contributing to the complexity of Manitoba's classrooms are the socio-economic conditions in which so many of our students live. And this is recognized and supported by the data within the province. Especially our First Nations students; some are the most transient, and I would refer to the University of Manitoba study, Child and Family Services: know students in care—over 10,000 children in the province of Manitoba in care, and many of those are quite transient and have multiple placements and multiple educational experiences, and those add to the complexity and the milieu of the classroom.

Class size and composition are essential to the job that teachers do. These factors affect our ability to provide Manitoba students the quality public education they so deserve. So Bill 2 is a good step forward ensuring that the learning conditions improve and that our students have the support that they need, and that this is entrenched in legislation.

Four years ago, the Manitoba Teachers' Society identified smaller class sizes as a priority for teachers and families, and we are proud of the role we played in helping to positively influence educational change. Over the years, Manitoba has been an outlier in the realm of public education, and it's an outlier that I've very, very proud of as a—I'm not only the president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, but I am also a president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and, when I communicate and collaborate with my colleagues from coast to coast, we are the outlier, and we are the success story, and the relationships between all the stakeholders in the province of Manitoba is a model to—a lighthouse, for the rest of the country.

Parents, teachers and school boards can be proud of the roles they have had in affecting positive change in education. Passing Bill 2 now will give students a change to enjoy a better tomorrow as it will give teachers the ability to meet the challenges that exist in today's complex classrooms.

So, thank you very much for the opportunity to present today.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Now move on to committee questions for the presenter.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Well, thank you, Mr. Gould, for coming tonight and for your support for Bill 2 and, more importantly, for your participation and MTS's participation on the oversight committee. A good deal of collaboration and consultation took place during the course of that committee's deliberations, and MTS was an indispensable partner in that process.

Teachers are an indispensable part of our public education system. They are the ultimate front-line workers, and so I want to thank you, and thank teachers across Manitoba for the work that they do in our classrooms each and every day. And I also want to thank your organization, not only for your advocacy on behalf of teachers across Manitoba, but also to help to build a stronger, safer, more sustainable public education system for every Manitoba child.

Thanks for coming tonight.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Thank you, Mr. Gould, for coming and giving us your presentation tonight.

I noticed down in page 3 of your presentation you mentioned class size and composition, and I just want to know if you've got any comments in regards to the composition piece to what you stated, how you said class size and composition are essential to the job that teachers do.

And yet in Bill 2 it doesn't say anything in regards to composition. So I was thrilled to see, in your presentation, the composition piece as well, but I noticed then, because you are a part of the committee, that Bill 2 doesn't touch on the composition piece to classes.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gould.

Mr. Gould: —as a former teacher—oh, sorry—I—we knew that Mr. Ewasko, as a teacher, you could appreciate certainly class size and composition go hand in hand.

And the task that was put before us was certainly based—a lot of—it starts off with class size. Class size

is the very first starting point, and then composition, of course, dovetails in there.

So the task of the committee, certainly, was to come up with the best formula based on the national experience and what the data shows in terms of class size. This is not ignoring, certainly, the importance of composition, and its ever-changing demographics within the province of Manitoba, and we're very responsive as teachers. And that is, maybe, the next frontier for going forward is to look at the composition and come up with a means—and I see Mr. Rondeau nodding as well, as a former teacher and a member of the Manitoba Teachers' Society—is that that is another frontier for us to consider in the future.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): As a pediatrician, when I get together with my colleagues who are pediatricians, one of the things that they tell me is that there's been quite a substantial increase in the number of children with various behavioural problems. And, of course, this would be another reason why it might be important to have small class sizes, particularly early on.

I wonder whether you would comment, and whether this is something which teachers have noticed too.

Mr. Gould: The teachers have certainly noticed that class size—as you mention, the complexity of the classroom and the diverse needs of our learners and our students and our children in the province have changed substantially. I can't necessarily say that the increase in behaviour problems or increase in autism is specific to that, but, certainly, you have English as a second language, you have immigrants, you have refugees, you have kids now that we have to consider whether they have post-traumatic stress. Coming from—as a teacher back in the day, I had some students from Kosovo that had experienced horrific life circumstances, and that's a roadblock to their learning.

So, yes, the milieu, the demographics and all the characteristics from the classrooms are changing, and it's more complex and, of course, it seems fairly obvious that if you have a lower student-teacher ratio, is you're going to have that connection between the adult in the classroom that can really connect and provide a safe and nurturing environment for students. And we know this pays dividends when, as this is Teacher Appreciation Week, when you travel through—and any one of you here in this room can reflect on a teacher that had a great impact and

influence on your life, and you see them years later and, it might not have been an aha moment within the classroom, but we all have the importance of those relationships, especially at the early-years level and as it goes on through all of public education is very important.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): I appreciate your comments and just a follow-up on my colleague's comment about compensation—or composition, sorry.

In the Nicholls report in 2002, and the minister at the time, the member for Brandon-East (Mr. Caldwell) said that, quote: "Composition is everything. In many ways, it is more important than class size." End quote.

So, is it your view that this government's approach, focusing on class size over composition in this legislation, is reflective of changes in research since the Nicholls report was released?

Mr. Gould: No, I'm not suggesting that that is any different. But, certainly, when you look at class size as a very first factor, composition is very important; I'm not going to ever minimize that and try and rank them. They are very, very, very parallel, if you will—but class size is—in terms of finite resources, that's the place to start.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation. The time for questions and answers has expired, so thank you.

So I'll now call the next presenter, Barbara Cerilli, private citizen.

Do you have any materials for the committee tonight?

Ms. Barbara Cerilli (Private Citizen): I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Cerilli: I'm saving on paper.

Well, hi, everyone. This is definitely not what I expected. I thought it'd be a little more intimate than this, but here we go.

So my name is Barb Cerilli and I'm here today to speak in favour of Bill 2, The Public Schools Amendment Act, to ensure and require that 90 per cent of K and grades 1-3 classes have 20 or fewer children. I'm a mother of three children who have all successfully navigated through our public school system and have gone on to successful careers and experiences through university and to the greater

world out there. And they are all committed to living, working, and enjoying Manitoba as a great place for their futures, and I'm very proud and happy about that.

* (18:20)

As well, I have been a teacher in Winnipeg for over 30 years. We won't get into those scary numbers. Those are the numbers. I've taught at every grade level, I've enjoyed a variety of teaching roles and responsibilities, and I'm here tonight to encourage and congratulate this government for moving our schools, and the important work of teaching, in a positive direction.

The most recent part of my career is that I am now currently principal of Victory School in the Seven Oaks School Division. I am fortunate to work in a school division where our leaders strive to give our kids the best we can. This is a good thing. I've enjoyed this role immensely in supporting improved learning outcomes and strengthening relationships with families, children and our school community. I know that my teachers are better served with their student number—when their student number count is not an additional hurdle for them to do the important work of teaching that they need to be doing every day. So I believe I can speak from a wealth of direct experience in how important it is to provide the best teaching and learning opportunities for all our kids and our families in our public schools.

Of course, I understand that Bill 2 is not a cure-all, but it is an important step forward in acknowledging that we need to ensure that the learning conditions improve and that our students have the support they need to be successful. I understand that this government has delivered on the promise to an improved school, teaching and learning experience with smaller class sizes for our children, investing in more school spaces and more teachers in classrooms. In fact, I understand that this government has built, or is building and renovating, 65 classrooms at 29 schools to support smaller classes since 2013. Please keep this good and very important work up.

I love the community that I work in, and I know the challenges my kids, my families and my teachers face each day in making a high-quality education happen.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

A commitment to small class size in a—is an important part of our recipe to get to success.

Smaller classes do work to give our teachers the time they need to speak with children one-on-one every day. We can build those vital relationships when we are not overcrowded; I have seen this work. Our teachers may not be able to solve issues of poverty and disadvantage, but if we have a school and classroom environment that enables us to connect with each child every day, we can be an important influence and support all of our children. The smaller class size program is a key to provide that ability to connect and encourage academically and to support social-emotional development of our children.

And I would just like to close by quoting someone that I read from a public school leader who, I believe, has his head and heart in a very good place when it comes to our public schools. Smaller classes will enhance the quality of education in our schools by providing students with more one-on-one time with their teachers. The early years are critical to student success. We want to ensure that teachers are able to provide students with the support they need to get a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy. You know who that is? Thank you, Minister Allum.

Thank you for your time this evening, and I encourage you—I encourage everyone—to support these progressive initiatives. Thank you.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Cerilli, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee now have questions?

Mr. Allum: Ms. Cerilli, I'm delighted that you would come out tonight. Looking at you from down the table, it's hard to believe that you could be a teacher for 30 years or that you would have three grown-up children, so—

Floor Comment: I love what I do. It keeps me young.

Mr. Allum: Yes. But I do want to say that it's absolutely essential that we hear, not only from a mom and teacher, but as a school leader the importance of the small class size initiative, and I greatly appreciate you coming here tonight and speaking on behalf of the bill. *[interjection]*

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Honourable—or, sorry, Ms. Cerilli.

Ms. Cerilli: Oh, sorry. I'm not supposed to do that, right. Go ahead.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Please proceed, Ms. Cerilli.

Ms. Cerilli: Can I go?

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Yes, you can.

Ms. Cerilli: I did want to just mention about what we're seeing so very much in our schools right now is the high number of children who have social-emotional concerns, issues that require so much of our time and energy in trying to support children.

So the one-on-one, the ability to connect, as Norm shared with you earlier, is so critical to supporting these children and these—and the families. It's not only the academical that—though that is so critical for our children to be able to grow into successful citizens and participatory citizens—but there's so much more in terms of what we're dealing with now in social-emotional. The needs that are coming to us are just—it's staggering. It's so sad.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Cerilli, for coming and presenting this evening.

Just a question to you as an administrator and as a—and as Mr. Allum had echoed, a 30-year educator. When this comes to class sizes for school boards and as far as you being an administrator, do you feel that some of that, that those decision-making processes right at the grassroots level, from the school board's point of view, and then talking, speaking to their own administrators within the school divisions, do you not feel that this bill at times is maybe tying their hands to make decisions within those school divisions and making the adjustments to your schools? Because who knows your school better than you do as an administrator.

Ms. Cerilli: I'm hoping I'm understanding your question correctly. I guess that one of the things—I'm very fortunate to be working in Seven Oaks, where our school, where our division leaders and our board as well, see the benefits of our classes being reasonable because our classes—in my school right now, our class size is reasonable.

When you talked a little bit about composition before, that kind of concerned me a little bit. I really do think that when I look at a class of 20 children that I might have right now, I can tell you that there are usually up to 10, 12 children in that class who are struggling with a lot of issues, whether it be poverty, whether it be neglect, so many things like that. I would welcome an initiative where we could really have a better look at what effect or what impact does the composition of those classrooms have on our class size. It's something, like, I mean, we can say 20, and, you know, I've yet to teach in a

classroom of 20 where—well, I have yet to teach in a classroom of 20; it's only lately that we've been looking at class sizes of 20—but I still worry about the composition of our classrooms in terms of all of the needs that we are dealing with right now.

And these are our kids. This is our future. These are—this is where we really need to make sure that we're quality in the beginning. So I'm sorry; I probably didn't answer your question, but.

Mr. Ewasko: So—and I think we're seeing it at the same stage there, Ms. Cerilli. In regards to composition, we were just mentioning on how important composition is in the classroom as well because of the increasing needs within special needs and all of those types of things.

You did mention, though, that within the Seven Oaks School Division, with the leadership and that, you have been seeing some of the class size numbers being manageable or under control and they see the benefit of lowering the class sizes.

Now, do you feel that that wasn't happening before Bill 2, or?

Ms. Cerilli: I feel that wasn't happening. I can tell you two years ago I had class sizes of 24, 23, in my 4-5s. I know it's only K to 3, but we were looking at 25 children a class. We are now seeing more manageable numbers. Yes, we are.

Mr. Gerrard: I want to pick up on your observation of the increased number of social and emotional issues coming forward. And clearly, this would be a reason for smaller class sizes, but I'm interested, with your 30-year perspective, what—how you see the situation has changed.

* (18:30)

Ms. Cerilli: Now, you know, there's so many variables. This is so—such a complex issue. Part of my experience now brings me to a community where children and families aren't as privileged. They're certainly not as affluent as other schools that I have worked in previously. And that brings me to a passion of mine in terms of working with children and families that are not privileged, but it also brings me to a place where I worry considerably about what's going to happen to these families and children.

We make—we have in a school a population of 250 children. We are constantly making lunches for children who come to us simply because parents don't have enough to make ends meet. So the

social-emotional can be anything from children who do have mental health issues. We deal with a lot of depression in young, young kids. We're seeing more and more depression all the time. We see neglect. We see families doing the best they can, but they just can't seem to make ends meet because they're, you know, a lot of them are struggling with employment issues. It's—there's just so many mores—last year we actually traded in some of our staffing units to get a full-time guidance counsellor to support our children.

So we do have—we can in schools decide how we want to use our teaching units and our decision was definitely to make sure that we are dealing—or supporting families and children who have social-emotional issues that often play out as behaviour, and that's the key.

A lot of times we have to dig—dig deep to find out what's going on. Found out last week, you know, the behaviour of a particular individual was based on the fact that, you know, there's some serious issues going on in the family, but it plays out as behaviour. And so it's our job to figure through all of those layers of all that behaviour we're seeing whether or not they're—you know, biting another kid, whether or not they're punching. I mean I've taken, you know, a number of punches myself because kids are so—they're so—there's anger, but behind that, all those layers, is fear.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Cerilli. Our time for questions has expired. Thank you very much for your presentation this evening.

I'll now call the next presenter, Tracey Wylie.

Ms. Wylie, am I saying your name correctly?

Ms. Tracey Wylie (Private Citizen): Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Great.

Do you have any written material for distribution?

Ms. Wylie: No, just verbal. You'll have to just remember it.

Mr. Chairperson: Right. We'll turn it over to you then. Thank you very much for coming.

Ms. Wylie: My name is Tracey Wylie. I am here today as a parent to voice my support of Bill 2.

I have two kids. My son is in grade 1, who is here with me today, and my daughter is in half-day

kindergarten, both at École Crane in Fort Garry. And they are both in classes that have 20 or fewer students.

I have volunteered in the school, especially in the kindergarten classroom a lot over the past year and a half, with my son last year and my daughter this year, and I have witnessed as an observer how a class with under 20 students runs very well.

My son Luke [*phonetic*] has benefited immensely from a small class. He is very active and sometimes has trouble staying on task and paying attention and sitting still, and his teacher last year and the one this year has been very wonderful giving him the one-on-one attention that really allowed him to learn and thrive.

His teacher this year reads with each and every one of the students individually, so she can chart their progress and evaluate how they are moving through the levels, and she reports back to us. And so, if class sizes were larger, each student would get significantly less time and they might not be able to offer that same level of feedback that we're getting now.

I asked Luke [*phonetic*] why he felt that a small class was important, and his main concern was that there wouldn't be room for any more kids during carpet time. I don't think that very many classrooms at the K-to-3 level have been designed to fit more than 20 students, or at least for sure not the ones at École Crane or the ones that I went to. And the kids really at this level thrive at being able to have time on the carpet and at their desks.

So, if you try to cram in more desks in there you're going to lose that carpet space and then you're going to force the kids to be sitting in their desk all day long from a very young age, and—which is for sure very difficult for my son but I'm pretty sure for pretty much any kid at that age.

My daughter, Samantha [*phonetic*], has also really benefited from the small class this year in kindergarten. She has type 1 diabetes and her teacher needs to be aware of her physical condition throughout the day. She needs to check her blood glucose monitor and watch for symptoms of low blood sugar, and this would be much more difficult with a larger class and more distractions.

My daughter also struggles with social anxiety, which is very common in this age—in kids this age, much more common than most people realize. Her teacher has been wonderful at helping draw her out

of her shell. When she started school, she wouldn't go to the bathroom at school and she would hardly speak to anyone, whether the teacher or other kids, anybody. Yet, when she came home, she would say she had a blast at school and would talk incessantly. But at school she was completely withdrawn. And her teacher has spent time gently drawing her out, helping her speak to the other kids, facilitating situations and helping her make friends. And now she's starting to actually have playdates with people, and that is because she's in a perfectly sized class with a teacher that has time to spend with her. If it had been much larger class, it would have been even more overwhelming for my daughter and it would have taken her even longer to get to the point where she could actually begin to learn and—just rather than feel overwhelmed with the class.

Now, when I ask my daughter why she felt a small class was important, she, of course, said none of that, but she said she would get too tired of sharing. So what I think she means is that she would have to wait longer to use the different stations that her teacher sets up. There are always several small stations set up in the kindergarten class, each with a different medium or theme, and her teacher adds new ones frequently, so the kids get exposed to many, many different things over the year. And, because they're small, only two to three kids get to use each station, so, if there were more students, she wouldn't be able to offer the same level of variety because she would—each station would have to stay up for longer to allow the students to have sufficient opportunity to learn from it.

Children gain confidence speaking in front of the class, whether it's answering questions or doing activities such as show and tell or oral presentations. And then, with a larger class size, each student would get fewer opportunities. And, for those kids like my daughter—but lots and lots of kids who are more nervous to speak in front of other people—the task would even be more daunting because it would be—there would be more people that she would have to speak in front of, or anybody. And so, having the confidence to speak out is an incredibly valuable life skill, and it's important to give kids enough practice in small, safe settings as frequently as possible from a young age so that they become more comfortable and this skill will be continuing to develop throughout their lives.

Now, as I understand it, the government has been working towards expanding schools and hiring teachers to help schools hit this 20-student guideline

for quite a while, and I feel this extra investment in the K to 3 education is worth it, because it will result in fewer kids needing more support which is probably more costly down the road.

And, if Bill 2 passes, hopefully, small classes will become the standard for the future and will benefit all future Manitoban children the way that they have already benefited mine.

Mr. Allum: Well, Ms. Wylie, thank you so much for coming tonight and for speaking up on behalf of the bill.

I think what struck me about your presentation is that that not only the advantages inside the classroom, but they extend outside the classroom, and that's such an important feature of what we're trying to accomplish.

I think it also helps a great deal to hear from Luke [*phonetic*] and Samantha [*phonetic*]; we need to hear from those folks too, because they're the ones, after all, that we're trying to serve as very best we can.

So I greatly appreciate you coming out tonight and sharing your observations with us. Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Wylie, as well, for attending and giving us your presentation, and it's really nice to hear personal stories about school and all those various things, so—and I think Luke [*phonetic*] is back there, so that's pretty cool.

Floor Comment: Yes.

Mr. Ewasko: Yes.

Floor Comment: The rest is voyageur for voyageur.

Mr. Ewasko: Yes.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for your presentation, and I noticed that you emphasized with your son that he's difficulty staying on task and that that's another important reason for having small class sizes.

Ms. Wylie: Thank you.

* (18:40)

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Thank you very much for your presentation.

And thanks, Luke. [*phonetic*] You have been awesome tonight.

I will now call on Deenie Lefko-Halas. I hope I said that right.

Do you have copies for the—okay. Staff will distribute them, and you can proceed when you're ready.

Am I saying your name right? Lefko-Halas.

Ms. Deenie Lefko-Halas (Private Citizen): That's correct.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, please proceed.

Ms. Lefko-Halas: I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to speak about Bill 2. My name is Deenie Lefko-Halas. I am currently teaching nursery kindergarten at Laura Secord School. I often tell people that I'm lucky I get to teach in a castle every day. And it's a very unique population where I say I teach children whose families are on social assistance and brain surgeons' children also, plus every configuration of family you can imagine.

So over the last 33 years I have taught everything from nursery to grade 6, but my heart is happiest when I'm working with the four- to six-year-old demographic. My current class sizes are 28 in the morning class, although I just had a set of twins move out, so it is 26, and 26 in the afternoon class. Earlier this school year, and in response to parental concerns over class size, my principal considered splitting my classes and creating a new nursery kindergarten classroom in the school. This would have met objectives similar to what Bill 2 prescribes.

However, upon realizing a number of drawbacks including a strong reluctance among parents to switch to the proposed new class—this happened approximately end of September, and, as you can imagine for four- and five-year-olds, it's—it would be quite traumatic to switch classrooms, switch teachers—as well as many parents already have child care in place, and not everybody would be able to stay in the morning class and would have to flip to the afternoon, so the timing of it was also a delicate issue.

So also the parents were not wanting to switch to a new class, so our principal decided to hire an additional part-time teacher to co-teach with me in my classroom for a portion of the school day. This action improved the student-teacher ratio to approximately 20 to one. It also satisfied all of the families with whom I have established a relationship. Finally, it allowed me to co-teach with a new teacher, to act as a mentor and coacher in effective practices for early years education. The teacher also brought some technological knowledge and skill that

were new to me, so this co-teaching relationship has been good for both of our professional learning. Most importantly, the arrangement enabled my children to experience the benefits of a smaller teacher–student-to-teacher ratio without causing any disruption or requiring the opening of an additional classroom in our school.

I realize that coteaching solution I have described will not be the best solution for every early years classroom with a large class size. For one thing, I am fortunate to have a large enough space to accommodate a large, active early years student population. However, I believe the solution was best for my students and their families, and I would encourage this committee to consider creative solutions to creating the desired student-to-teacher ratio such as the one in which I currently work. I would also add that I have a wonderful educational assistant, a support staff position our division has traditionally awarded to early years teachers with numbers exceeding 25. Venus and I have been team room 204 for the last 17 years. Had my class been formulated to 20 or less students, I would have lost Venus, and in such a scenario, the potential improvements would have been more than mitigated by the loss of someone who I've team taught with for the last 17 years. Based on my experience, I would encourage a focus on the ratio of students to teachers as the primary objective with co-teaching situations as a possible alternative to opening new stand-alone classrooms.

And, as an aside, in our school, it's a huge building, but we are, like, we have over 500 students as well as no physical space. Like, we are constantly, like, where would we create another classroom? Would it be a portable that would be tacked on? And so, you know, the physical space is also an issue. I know that in my current experience the option that has created the maximum benefit for my students.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Allum: Well, Ms. Lefko-Halas, thank you so much for coming tonight.

I want to first of all thank you for your excellent career and your dedication and commitment to teaching in our public education system. It's the experience of yours that makes for a stronger educational system and helps our children, and I really do want to thank you for that.

Also want to thank you for articulating something that's sometimes lost in the debate over Bill 2 or the small class size initiative: Were there no small class size initiative, there would have been no need for there to be a creative solution. The number simply would have stayed at 28 in the morning and 26 in the afternoon.

And, as a result of this initiative, creative solutions were happening inside the school, and kudos to your principal for that, and that it met with your satisfaction, with the kids' satisfaction and with parental satisfaction is quite satisfying to hear that.

I'm pleased to hear that you and Venus are—remain a team, team 204. It's nice to have somebody you work with with such a beautiful name as that. I work with somebody named Pearl, and so I understand that completely.

And so I thank you for bringing this variation on the theme here tonight, because I think you've provided a very interesting piece of insight as to the importance of this initiative and most importantly, the importance of utilizing creative solutions in order to serve our children better. So thank you so much for coming tonight.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Lefko-Halas, for sharing, as well, your story and your journey in the education world. It sounds exciting, and it seems—it also sounds that your classroom is a pretty cool learning environment as well.

Not to totally agree with the minister, but it sounded like to me that your principal had it fairly under control as far as making the adjustments and—to your class size, and it's great to hear that she was able to hire a co-teacher for you to bring those—that average down. And it seems that I think we're failing to realize that parent–parental voice and teaming with the school team actually does get some things moving forward.

And I think in this situation, whether Bill 2 is there or not, I think that your administration would have come to an agreement and to best suit yourself, the kids and the parents as well and for the school environment, so I applaud them at that initiative as well. So thank you very much for—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Lefko-Halas.

An Honourable Member: Thank you.

Ms. Lefko-Halas: Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I—two things, just for clarification.

First of all, you're co-teaching, but in your report, you talk about this being for a portion of the day, and maybe you could explain that. And, second, I think what you're saying is that this model of co-teaching should be as acceptable as having two physical classrooms with two separate teachers. Is that what—your message? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Lefko-Halas, sorry about that. I have to—I know it's the weirdest process. I have to say your name first before you speak. I know. It's odd. But go ahead.

Ms. Lefko-Halas: So, just to give you an idea of how, say, a day in my—it's a half-day program, so we usually start with a group time. And, I mean, if I'm teaching, I can have 29 kids or 13 kids on the carpet. It's sort of—it's a management thing that, you know, it doesn't—that—at that point, class size, when I'm just doing teaching and children are having carpet time together.

But, when it comes to a time where, as Ms. Wylie talked about, the centres where children are engaging, and you want them to have lots of hands-on experience with direction of a teacher and another adult to be there. Like, that's where you need the extra people with expertise.

And so, in my case, it's usually an hour of when we call choice time where we have certain centres that—you know, I keep track of who comes to which space and making sure all the children have opportunities to try the various centres. They are making choices in their play and who's going at different times, but it's really important that I know who—and, I mean, just the fact of evaluating that number of students. And in this way, I have another set of eyes and ears and, you know, to also be able to help me in that part of my job.

But, as an aside to what you're talking about, class composition, like, even talking to teachers in our school—like, our averages are numbers of 23 in the early years, around there. And as I said, because the physical space is limited is why we can't just create another classroom as easily as the other schools might be able to. But some of the teachers were saying that they're noticing that supports for special needs children, children with behaviours, social-emotion things, that is becoming more prevalent.

* (18:50)

Almost every class has a child that we just—if we could have a teaching assistant to be one-on-one with this child would make such a difference to the chemistry of the classroom. And, you know, the number of times that a teacher is taken away from the teaching of 20 students to kind of help work with one child is, you know, we have to kind of look at the big picture. And so—and it seems like funding seems to be dropping off as far as being able to give supports to classroom teachers. So it's just another aside that—

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

I will now call on Maggie Cox, president of the parent council at Greenway School.

Do you have any written materials for the committee? No? Please proceed when you are ready.

Ms. Maggie Cox (Parent Council, Greenway School): Hi. My name is Maggie Cox. I am the president of the parent council at Greenway School. I am also an educational assistant in the St. James school division. And I am also a parent of three young boys: my oldest, Ewen *[phonetic]*, is in grade 6; my middle son, Rufus *[phonetic]*, is in grade 4; and my youngest is in grade 2, Kier *[phonetic]*.

As a parent, what I see happening, as I've seen, my oldest son didn't have the benefit of the small class sizes. My son had a reading delay. It wasn't a significant reading delay in the beginning, and I think, had the classroom size been smaller, his average classroom size was about 27 all the way through. Wonderful teachers, amazing teachers, I give props to the hard work that they have done. Unfortunately, they didn't have the ability to give him the one-on-one time that he needed, and it took a number of years before we were finally able to get him into a separate program through the division, and now his reading level is at where it should be. Going into grade 7, he is now reading at an early-end-of-grade-6 reading level. I think that could have been skipped all together had we had those smaller class sizes, had we had more one-on-one time, had it been noticed sooner how far behind he was falling.

Where I see the difference is in my youngest son who has a little bit of a delay himself in kind of the writing area. His teacher is—she's got 18 kids in the class. She is able to, during writing time, because there are less kids, there are less needs, she is able to sit one-on-one with him and work on developing an IEP that is enabling him to become a better writer. I am confident that as he continues with this teacher

and in next year with a smaller class size, that this delay is going to be able to be fixed. And I know that's not—every problem isn't going to be solved by having smaller class sizes, but I certainly see littler problems, little with big solutions by having small class sizes.

The other thing is, my middle son, who is just the type of kid that goes through school with no problems. In grade 3, he was in a small class. His teacher had lots of animals, and he had birds and he had fish and he had some sort of rodent of some sort in the class, and because of the small physical space that was needed for 20 kids, he could have these things. And that would be lacking if you have 27 kids in your class. There would be no space for this. And so he has benefited along the way.

I know our school is very large. Again, like Ms. Lefko-Halas has pointed out, sometimes the physical space is difficult. We have Adaptive Skills Programs that take up space. But I have seen what these numbers have done with my children. As the president of the parent council, I have heard numerous voices from other parents coming to me and talking to me over the years, concerns in the past about large numbers versus concerns—less concerns now. Teachers are more able to address the issues. I have been—I have talked to numerous teachers in our school about this issue one-on-one, either my kids' teachers or teachers just outside in the halls, I've been in that school.

As an EA, I'm lucky enough to work where, in a middle school, our numbers are small enough that we have 20 students in this grade 6 class that I currently work in. We have a lot of high needs in that class. We currently have three EAs working in that class. Many have along the way as it is.

So that's basically why I am in support of Bill 2 today.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Allum: Well, Ms. Cox, thank you so much for coming out tonight and for giving—and supporting the bill, first as a mom and how it affected you and Rufus [*phonetic*] and Kieran [*phonetic*] in short order, I'm guessing, and then as an EA. And I just want to say: EAs are indispensable partners in our educational system, in our classrooms. And so, as the Minister of Education, I feel an obligation to thank you on behalf of all EAs for the work that you do in our schools each and every day.

And then I also want to acknowledge your work as president of the local parent council. They are also indispensable to our schools, and parents come home from a busy day at work and there you are in a classroom and then you go and do, as president of the parent council. So I want to thank you. The Manitoba Association of Parent Councils was a critical partner on the oversight committee. They play a valuable role in what we do in education here in Manitoba and so, on all of those fronts, I want to thank you for coming here tonight and for sharing your experiences with us.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Cox, for journeying out tonight, and I also commend you for wearing multiple hats at the school: president of the parent council and also being an EA. I had the pleasure of spending a year as an EA myself in my early teaching career, and it's definitely a challenging occupation but a very necessary supportive role as well in the school and as part of the school team. So I commend you also for that and just for coming tonight and sharing your story. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for coming and presenting and really talking about several children who have unique needs but who, with a little extra attention, can be doing as well as their classmates, I think is what you—story you were trying to tell us and how important that extra attention is to make sure that they're doing well.

Ms. Cox: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call on Joe Halas.

While they're handing out the copies, you can proceed when you're ready.

Mr. Joe Halas (Private Citizen): Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Joe Halas. I am the art consultant for the Winnipeg School Division. I also serve as vice-president of the Manitoba Association for Art Education and chair of the Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba. Tonight I'm presenting as a private citizen, although I am informed by these various people I hang out with.

I want to say firstly that I do speak in support of Bill 2, but as an arts educator, there were a couple of concerns that I just wanted to, perhaps, highlight. As an art educator and someone who believes passionately in the value of education in and through the arts, particularly for young children, I

am aware of an additional concern to those that Deenie Lefko-Halas has outlined, a few speakers ago, regarding potential issues with the creation of new spaces.

I have heard from colleagues and school administrators that I work with who worry that, as schools respond to the potential requirements to open more early years classrooms, they may be compelled to convert dedicated music or arts rooms for general K-to-3 classroom use. There is a concern that the possibility of such collateral damage to quality arts programs could adversely affect not just K-to-3 learners but could impose challenges in providing quality arts education in whole elementary school populations. So my hope is that, as Bill 2 goes forward, that due consideration will be given to encouraging and finding solutions that will maintain existing specialized arts facilities in Manitoba schools.

* (19:00)

Finally, I also wonder if the identified student-to-teacher ratio of one to 20 will be set out as a requirement for specialized instruction in schools that offer music, art, drama or dance programming for K-to-3 learners. I would like to express the hope that they would, on behalf of arts educators in the organizations with whom I work, that the new standards would be consistent across subject areas.

So, with that, I thank you for your efforts in improving the learning conditions for young people in our province. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Allum: Yes, thank you, Mr. Halas, for coming out tonight.

That's actually a fascinating circumstance that you have described, and I want you to know that our government is not only committed to small class sizes in public education but to the arts and to music education and physical education; the full menu of things that make for healthy child development.

I think you probably know or I—at least let you know that in—since this initiative began we poured almost \$44 million into renovating schools and classrooms to ensure that the kinds of classes that you teach are not compromised, and we're going to continue to ensure that over the long term.

The work that you do in our schools to touch our children's imagination is invaluable and I thank you very, very much for that.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Halas, for coming and giving your presentation, and it's another side to the story, right? And this story, I think, is going to have a few different sides.

And speaking to my colleagues, as well, in the arts and the music and also various teachers, I know some of the schools in our local school division, which I used to teach in, had to move some of their computer labs and turn their computer labs into classrooms and there's only, especially in this great province of ours, Manitoba, there's only so many outdoor ed classes you can have at minus 30 degrees, right? And so I've also heard of these schools that are waiting for these promises; and I know it's the black-book period but we won't go there in regards to, you know, turning the music rooms in various different classrooms to make room for the K-to-3 cap. So I do echo your sentiment in regards to making sure that we try to protect those programs as well.

So, thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for coming. I think it's very important that you're here talking about arts.

Have you had any experience—are you aware of any art classrooms or music classrooms which have been sacrificed in order to create extra classrooms because of the change in class size?

Mr. Halas: I am not aware of any that have had to close for this reason, and I'm hoping I won't become aware of any that have to close for this reason.

I have, however, had conversations with administrators who have said, you know, we have so much space we value—in fact, the context of the conversation—we're in the process of doing an arts strategic review in our school division and a principal was talking about how well utilized the art room is in their school. They don't actually have an art teacher in this elementary school, but the teachers book time and use the room. And he did express the concern that if there came a situation where he had to create some more classrooms he, you know, would fight to not have to lose that room. But it was a concern; it was on his radar that this was, you know, possibly in the mix in terms of the decisions he would have to make, yes.

Mr. Gerrard: Just one more comment to share with you about the importance of art. And this was at a school where they were having trouble getting the children to attend and they started an arts class, and all of a sudden the kids were coming in and there's

no more of the problem with attendance. So there's an example of why art can be a very positive experience.

Mr. Halas: Thank you, and that goes right through to grade 12 to graduation rates to all of those things. The arts are very engaging for students, and as long as we offer them, the students will very happily participate.

So, thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

That was the last presenter I have on Bill 2.

**Bill 7—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Protecting Child Care Space in Schools)**

Mr. Chairperson: So now we're going to move to Bill 7 and call Josh Watt, the executive director of the Manitoba School Boards Association.

Do you have written material for the committee?

Mr. Josh Watt (Manitoba School Boards Association): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. As the staff passes it out, feel free to proceed when you're ready.

Mr. Watt: Thank you very much, everyone. It's a privilege and an opportunity to be here to address you on the subject of Bill 7.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of our president, Ken Cameron, who regrets that he cannot be here due to a prior scheduling commitment.

Manitoba's school boards are long-time advocates for accessible, high-quality, early learning and care for all children. We know the positive impact such care has in terms of school readiness and success. We know that ready access to such care has a positive impact on families, on communities and on our province's economy.

We accept that, as governors of the public school system, school boards have a moral responsibility to help ensure strong beginnings for our youngest citizens, even before they reach school age. Our commitment to children and child care is evident in our policies and actions. Manitoba's school trustees advocated for their national organization, the Canadian School Boards Association, to support and promote the national children's agenda. We are vocal supporters of efforts to eliminate child poverty in Manitoba and beyond, and we are active participants on a wide range of early learning and

care committees and groups, both provincially and locally.

School boards work closely with child-care providers both within and outside of school walls, helping to ensure that the transition from the preschool to school years is as seamless as possible. Our commitment to in-school child-care programs was encapsulated a decade ago in an MSBA resolution adopted as policy at our annual general meeting. Via that resolution, we asked that the government revise then current practice, so that existing school space dedicated to early learning and child-care programs, such as daycares, before- and after-school programs and nursery programs would not be factored into the calculation of official school capacity.

Our concern in passing this resolution was that, without such a change, school boards might be required to relocate or displace early learning and care programs to free up space for kindergarten to grade 12 programming. Given this history, the committee will not be surprised to learn that the Manitoba School Boards Association supports the intent of Bill 7, as indicated in its title, the protection of child-care space in schools. There are, however, practical and interrelated considerations that must be acknowledged and addressed if we are to live up to that ideal. Let me walk you through the three.

The first is mandated class size. With minimal exceptions, school boards are now required to ensure that kindergarten to grade 3 classes have a maximum of 20 students. In areas of the province with increasing student numbers, the 20 K-to-3 requirement is creating an ongoing demand for additional classroom space. The same schools that house primary grades are also the ones most likely to have child-care centres, and those child-care centres may be occupying the only space available for carving out newly required classrooms.

No. 2, the role of the Public Schools Finance Board. Major capital projects are funded not by school boards but by the provincial Public Schools Finance Board. With a limited budget and a province-wide mandate, the PSFB always attempts to achieve a careful balance in remaining responsive to what are viewed locally as pressing priorities. Even when those priorities are provincial in nature, such as the building of additional classroom space required by the 20 K-to-3 initiative, new capital construction and major renovations are time-consuming projects.

When growing school populations or new mandates such as 20 K-to-3 create a demand for new classroom space, schools have only two choices: find it or build it. To find it, they may need to relocate a child-care centre. To build it, they need the support of the Public Schools Finance Board, and that support is needed in a timely manner.

The third and last factor is minimum notice period. In its final provision, Bill 7 provides for two as-of-yet-unspecified minimum notice periods before a child-care centre may be required to move: one for the moving of a child-care centre within a school and one for relocating a child-care centre from one school to another. The legislation gives the minister the authority to set these minimum notice periods via regulation.

* (19:10)

In anticipation of the passage of Bill 7, and the subsequent development of these regulations, the Manitoba School Boards Association has been surveying school board members as to their views on what could constitute appropriate minimum notice periods. Not surprisingly, the responses we have received to date vary tremendously.

Boards responsible for schools with stable or declining student populations are more inclined to suggest a longer notice period, while those who are already facing space pressures are opting for a shorter time frame that is more responsive to these constraints.

While we do not wish to identify a minimum notice period at this time, we would advocate for sufficient flexibility in the regulation to ensure that the varying circumstances of schools and school boards are appropriately accommodated. In this respect, we remain—as always—available and accessible for advanced consultation prior to the entry into force of this proposed regulation.

The three factors that our association has identified in terms of mandated class size, the role of the public schools' finance board and flexibility in the notice period for requiring a child-care centre to relocate, are all closely interrelated and must be considered together. School boards are in the best position to weigh all of these factors, but Bill 7 gives the final authority to decide the fate of in-school child-care centres to the minister.

While we enjoy a good working relationship with the department, this would not be our preferred process, but we do respect the minister's authority in

this regard. However, we do ask that, in making any decisions under the provisions of Bill 7, the minister carefully consider each of these three factors that we have outlined.

As indicated at the beginning of this brief: school boards have, and will continue to, embrace their moral responsibility to help ensure a strong start for our youngest citizens as high quality child-care can provide. But we cannot let that moral responsibility negatively impact our ability to meet our legal obligation to provide a high quality education to school-aged children whom we serve.

Thank you.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Thank you, Mr. Watt, for coming, and I know that you have only recently—it's probably longer than I think—have come to take over the role with MSBA, and I know you're doing an extraordinary job. I take very seriously the points that you've made, as always with you, as very thoughtful, careful analysis of the bill, and I appreciate that very, very much.

I would say, in relation to your three important issues, two of the three, in my view, are the kinds of issues that we're kind of happy to challenge. We have a—you just heard how important it is to have small class size initiative, and how important it is to have a one-on-one time. We recognize that it creates some pressures. That's why we work with school boards, and that's why we work with all of our partners in the education system, in order to address those issues.

With relation to the Public Schools Finance Board, you're right, it's a very active board. Because we build schools, and we renovate schools, and we build child-care centres, and as a result of that, it's kept the PSFB much busier than it otherwise been previously to us coming into government.

As for the minimum notice period, that's—it's a very good point, and I would say this: this minister is nothing but consultative. You can be sure that we will engage with MSBA and all of our partners, MTS, MAPC, MASBO, the whole list, to ensure that we do right by our children.

Thank you so much for coming tonight.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Thank you Josh, and—or, Mr. Watt—and it is very nice to see you again, and I appreciate your presentation on behalf of Mr. Cameron.

A couple things, I guess. It's very interesting that we're having both these bills come to committee today, and one talking about K-to-3 cap sizes and the other one talking about protecting child-care spaces. And you made a very good point in regards to, you know, this decision and as far as timelines and sizes and that comes, right into the minister's office.

And from what I've seen, working here on Broadway for the last four and a half years, I'm not quite sure—I don't think I can see the school that I used to teach at from here, and I just appreciate the work that the school boards have to do and work with the teachers, and work with the administration on the challenges that each school has to face. And it is very interesting that the minister has decided to propose these couple bills and then bring in the complete power on some of the decision making right into the department as opposed to leaving it at the grassroots, and those people who have been elected by the community members.

But I guess this is more so of a comment, instead of a question, but I appreciate you coming today and sharing your words and the various survey results that you've done. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Thank you for coming and speaking eloquently about the situation.

I wonder if you could comment on two points. If you refer back to the 2006 resolution adopted by the Manitoba School Boards Association and whether that resolution, if it had been implemented, would have a similar impact to Bill 7.

And the second point, you mention that child-care centres may be occupying the only space available for carving out newly required classrooms. Just to ask whether you're aware of situations which are as described and where, you know, the child-care centres are the only space that's available to—for newly required classrooms and what the School Boards Association would recommend under such circumstances.

Mr. Watt: Yes, in response to Dr. Gerrard's question—and thank you for that, Dr. Gerrard—I just want to clarify that in terms of the resolution that was proposed by our association, we did work very closely with the government in terms of ensuring its implementation.

You know, it's a very difficult situation for us because we always attempt to strike a balance between the maintenance of our local autonomy and also accommodating the government's priorities.

And, in this respect, I think, you know, in terms of the spirit of our presentation, we want to just communicate that, you know, in terms of achieving the balance between the two sets of bills, we don't want to be subject to a Hobson's choice.

As we've recommended in our brief, you know, it is incumbent upon us and it is, in fact, our moral obligation to accommodate child-care centres within our school infrastructure, and that's important to us and always has been. So what the point that we were making is more one of, you know, when we do move forward with other priorities as set by the government under legislation or even within policy that has impacts upon the use of school infrastructure, it's important to consider a balance in both of those.

So, as the minister has acknowledged, you know, we have worked quite closely in terms of expanding existing school infrastructure in order to meet the 20K3 targets, and we're very grateful for the government for allocating funds in this time of fiscal constraint in order to make that a reality. But, at the same time, we know that to mandate something as significant as 20K3, which we also support, and also to move forward with the protection of child-care centre spaces within our walls is an important consideration going forward.

So, while I'm not familiar myself with any instances, I know that our members would be more familiar with that, and I can certainly follow up with the committee to outline some of those instances where, you know, we project or there—where there may be real instances of competition between the two sets of priorities that are being proposed today.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Now call Pat Wege from Manitoba Child Care Association.

Do you have written materials for the committee?

Ms. Pat Wege (Manitoba Child Care Association): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. As they're handing them out, you can feel free to proceed when you're ready.

Ms. Wege: Thank you, and good evening. I'm Pat Wege, and I'm the executive director at the Manitoba Child Care Association. MCCA is a non-profit registered charity established in 1974. We're entirely self-funded and have more than 4,000 members

including licensed child-care centres, family child-care homes, early childhood educators, child-care assistants. We're the largest provincial child-care organization in Canada and an affiliate member of the Canadian Child Care Federation.

I'm here tonight on behalf of MCCA to speak in support of Bill 7 and would also like to commend the Minister of Education for sponsoring the bill.

Co-located child-care programs have often struggled with shared space, and it's become a pressure point in many facilities, especially those who have year-to-year leases or permits. So we're quite pleased that the bill has been tabled. MCCA would also like to thank the government of Manitoba for their leadership in bringing child care and schools closer together.

* (19:20)

The child care in schools policy has been successful in paving the way for licensed child-care centres to become co-located in a school, and as of March 31st, 2015, there were 681 child-care centres and nursery schools in Manitoba, and of those, 326 were co-located in a public or independent school. Now, that doesn't count child-care facilities co-located in post-secondary institutions, centres occupying buildings still owned by the school division but no longer operating as public schools or stand-alone facilities located on leased school division property.

Anecdotally, child-care centres report that parents often select their child's school based not on proximity to home, business or special programs, but solely on the availability of a child-care centre, whether preschool or school age, and this preference should not go unrecognized nor unplanned for by a school division or a government when considering the needs and preferences of modern families.

The presence of a child-care centre in a school brings many advantages in addition to convenience for the family. Children are able to become familiar with the school environment many years before kindergarten entry, and also benefit from the early learning opportunities provided by a high-quality program. They're able to start kindergarten with plenty of experience in a group-learning environment and able to socialize with peers, ready to integrate into and explore the classroom with confidence right from the first day.

Many principals now see the benefits of child care as the first tier of education and help enrich the preschool experience by including the child-care centre in school activities such as special assemblies, lunches or by allowing children to use the gym, library and the playground. So there's many advantages when child care and education put the needs of children and families first and work together in the spirit of educating, where good child care educates and good education cares.

We are aware that licensed child care currently falls outside the mandate of school divisions and appreciate that divisions have been so open to including and supporting child care where possible. We also understand the advantages of a smaller class size initiative and realize it has put pressure on school divisions working towards compliance with the guidelines by 2017.

Now, MCCA supports Bill 7 because it will provide much-needed continuity for families and stability for children, ensuring that as much as possible space within a school remains available to licensed child care. If change is unavoidable, it provides a process to follow if there's a need to reduce space or move the child-care centre to an alternate location.

I do want to speak a little bit to section 47.7(3), minimum notice period, because in my opinion, that's really the heart of the document. MCCA has surveyed child-care centres co-located in a school to identify the notice period that they feel they require to make alternate arrangements for space, and based on their responses MCCA recommends the following for consideration for a prescribed notice in the regulation: The child-care programs co-located in a school will be provided with a minimum of two full calendar years' notice from the school division if the school requires the child-care centre to vacate the school entirely, or one full calendar year's notice if the child-care centre will lose some of its space within the school and the number of licensed child-care spaces will be reduced, or six months' notice if the child-care centre is to relocate within the school. Renovations will be minimal and the number of licensed child-care spaces will not change.

And here's the rationale: Child-care centres face the following issues when having to relocate: It's not so easy to move a child-care program; they can't go just anywhere. Finding suitable alternate space for

the same number and ages of children is a challenge. The alternate space must be able to meet provincial licensing requirements or the centre must have the financial resources in the bank to fund renovations to meet licensing requirements. If there's no money in the bank the centre may need time to fundraise or apply for community grants to fund the renovations to meet the licensing requirements.

Just as a PS, the Family Choices Building Fund has been a great initiative, but it's restricted to school or community projects that are providing new spaces only. It's not for existing spaces.

The centre revenue is fixed by the province and there's no way to generate additional revenue to pay for fixed costs such as rent, should it increase. Therefore the operating costs at an alternate location must be affordable to the centre out of their existing budget. The alternate space must be within reasonable walking distance of the school to maintain access for school-age children or the school division must be willing to provide no- or low-cost transportation.

In a worst-case scenario, if an alternate location cannot be secured, or the alternate location is not accessible, parents may be—may need to change child-care providers, and multi-year wait times for child-care space are not uncommon in our province, and access to both the school of choice and a licensed child-care space appears to be a significant problem for Manitoba parents.

To expedite a relocation within a new school or a community facility, we recommend the government of Manitoba make funds available to cover the cost of construction or renovations to meet licensing requirements and also any moving expenses that might be incurred. In addition, school divisions should cover the expense if a new occupancy permit is required due to an in-school relocation and, just so you are aware, an occupancy permit can cost as much as \$500 just to switch a classroom.

In conclusion, the Manitoba Child Care Association is in support of Bill 7, to protect child-care space in schools. We believe the bill outlines a reasonable process. It will facilitate communication and collaboration between the child-care program and the school, and it will help ensure that child care will continue to be available in schools where possible. We have made a recommendation for a notice period, knowing Manitoba families can't work without quality child care, and our understanding of

the challenges facing a licensed child-care centre that must relocate. We thank Minister Allum for his leadership on this initiative.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Allum: Thank you, Ms. Wege, for coming tonight, and I thank you for acknowledging, at least in the written section, my predecessor. We stand on the shoulders of those who come before us, and I'm no different. I stand on the shoulders of former Minister Bjornson, Minister Allan, and Mr. Lemieux and others who've served in this capacity.

I think your organization—your own personal dedication to the cause of child care has been indispensable in this province, and so your organization constantly pushing us to do the right thing is very welcome. I take very seriously the recommendations that you provided to us because they are extremely valuable. And, when you're doing the right thing—I guess I would conclude by saying this—when you're doing—trying to do the right thing, they're often not uncomplicated. And it takes partners and partnerships and collaboration in order to work through a problem to get us to the right spot that serves in the best interest of children and parents. And so, I want to thank you for being a very constructive voice in this regard.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Wege, for your presentation, and I appreciate the information that you've supplied as well. So, I'll be going over that and I look forward to this bill moving to third reading. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, thank you so much for coming in and presenting. You've always been a very strong advocate for child care and that's important.

I notice that you put in one of your points that the multi-year wait times for child-care space are not uncommon. It continues to be an issue and, clearly, we don't want to be giving up existing child-care spaces.

Do we need to be doing more in terms of building more child-care spaces, not just in new schools, but in existing schools?

Ms. Wege: Absolutely we do. And I know, not too long ago, the commission on early learning and child care released a report to help the government of Manitoba move forward on a commitment to add 12,000 new child-care spaces over the next five to seven years. So we absolutely need more child care, and I'm also very pleased that we now have a road

map that tells us how to get there within that time frame.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call on Kim Perring, On The Move Inc.

Do you have written materials for the committee? They'll hand them out and you can proceed when you're ready.

Ms. Kim Perring (On The Move Inc.): Hi, I'm Kim Perring. I'm the executive director at On The Move Incorporated. It's a preschool and child-care-school-age child-care facility in River Heights.

I would like to tell you that On The Move Inc. and Carpathia Children's Centre Inc., child-care facilities with programs located in both École J.B. Mitchell and John Dafoe School, fully support Bill 7. On The Move Inc. and Carpathia Children's Centre have a long history of providing quality child care to children living in Winnipeg. Currently, the two child-care centres provide care for over 322 children.

* (19:30)

In the spring of 2010, we were contacted by the principal at J.B. Mitchell School. She was concerned regarding the number of families with children in nursery, kindergarten and grade 1 indicating their reluctance to enrol until they could secure child care. The school had looked at the feasibility of opening a before-and-after-school program to accommodate families requesting child care. However, their parent council was not interested in operating a program. The principal requested a meeting with Carpathia Children's Centre and On The Move Incorporated to see if we would be willing to expand our services to meet this demand. The school offered both child-care facilities, their own classroom, and after meeting with Tom Bobby, the assistant secretary-treasurer at the time, and the principal, we licensed 55 additional spaces, both kindergarten and school age, at J.B. Mitchell School in September of 2010.

Enrolment was up and in many ways this could be considered a win-win. Two years later, the increased enrolment meant that the school needed a classroom back. Both Carpathia Children's Centre and On The Move were required to go through the relicensing process once again and move to other areas in the school at their own expense.

Again, in 2012, and each year since, the school has come back to us in the spring indicating it

requires their space back for the upcoming fall. The current lease states that should the school require their space back, we would receive 90 days' notice and, in turn, would be forced to give the notice to the families of 55 children.

Currently, of the 65 kindergarten children enrolled at J.B., 42 of those children attend either daycare, the equivalent of two of the three kindergarten classrooms. Without those spaces, we would be forced to reduce our child care for kindergarten-aged children. This inevitably would impact the number of children enrolling in kindergarten at J.B., as many of our parents choose J.B. because they have access to child care. Without child care, they would be forced to enrol elsewhere.

Fortunately, to date, the school has found a way to accommodate the two child-care programs, recognizing the loss of 55 child-care spaces as an undesirable outcome. However, this uncertainty presents a challenge for both parties each year at this time as we are both looking at our projected enrolments for the upcoming fall.

In summary, Bill 7 provides good outcomes for families who rely on licensed child care as located in schools.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Perring.

Honourable Minister?

Mr. Allum: Thank you. I think we have you on the list as Kerring but it's actually Perring. Is that correct? Yes, well, Ms. Perring, thank you so much for coming out tonight and describing the circumstance and the tremendous amount of collaboration and co-operation has gone on among various parties in order to ensure that those valuable 55 child-care spaces remain there. And what we're endeavouring to do is to solidify the rules around how this proceeds to give you the kind of certainty that's required.

But, most importantly, in addition to the insights that you brought tonight, you have busy days working at the child-care centre, and then to come out tonight and provide us with some important advice on this bill is very helpful and greatly appreciated. Thank you so much.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Perring, for coming and sharing your story, again, and keep up the good work, working with all our young students.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, and coming from River Heights, and thank you for your efforts in providing

such a strong child-care program, an early childhood education program for young people.

Will Bill 7 fully, you know, make sure that you don't go through these problems again or, you know, do we need further measures beyond that?

Ms. Perring: I think it's a start. Currently, we have a good working relationship. We have a new principal in J.B. Mitchell, so we're kind of starting again from the start, which happens. But we are fortunate that, you know, they see the value in having the child-care program there and enrolment was down in the school at that point. I guess a lot of centres, from my conversations with other directors, is we don't know what to do or where to go to get the support because not everybody's in, you know, such a fortunate situation where they have a good working relationship with the school.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Ms. Perring, you made a comment—obviously the 90-day component of the lease as a sort of a constant threat to the existence of your service, and I'm just wondering, your comment on whether or not you're supportive of what the Manitoba Child Care Association put forward in their presentation, in terms of their recommendations on section 47(3), on the minimum notice period, whether or not you agree with the time frames that they advocated, or if you have your own time frames that you would suggest?

Ms. Perring: Yes, I think that would be fantastic. We've lived with, for the five years in the school system, with a 90-day lease, so I think it would be an improvement.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now call on Brianne Goertzen, private citizen.

Do you have any materials for the committee tonight? No? Please proceed when you're ready.

Ms. Brianne Goertzen (Private Citizen): Good evening. My name is Brianne Goertzen, and I speak to you tonight as a private citizen to express my support for this bill. I have been an advocate for child care long before I myself became a mother. I have always recognized the value in strong child-care provisions, and my own master's research further reinforced my convictions that if Canada and Manitoba is serious about providing for families, then a universal child-care system is required.

I want to tell you a little bit about my experience with child care. I have a very demanding job that requires me to travel quite a bit, work long hours, and myself and my partner must rely on friends to make up the gaps in our child-care provisions. I am sharing this not because I want sympathy or a pat on the back for slogging through it. Instead, I want to put the parental face to child care.

I am here to say child care is a constant struggle, a struggle that most parents face in silence, because we are told that, you know, we decided to have children, so buck up and figure it out. This sentiment is supported by the larger narrative around child care, one in which child care is viewed as an individual responsibility, a personal matter that needs to be arranged between parents.

However, this view is narrow and blurred with privilege, the privilege of some decision makers who do not understand the pain, anguish and guilt parents face when safe, affordable and accessible child care cannot be found, the privilege of having the means to pay for personal-care or private-care centres to look after their children, and the privilege of their sex, because, as we know, women are still disproportionately responsible for care responsibilities and remain grossly underrepresented in all levels of government. But here I digress.

It is no secret that it takes two incomes to make ends meet, thereby requiring both parents to work. Child care is not an issue reserved for stressed-out parents frantically looking for a responsible person or centre to look after their children. Child care is a public issue. It is a family policy matter. The need for the provision of a functional, universal child-care system is not reserved for just parents. It is for those grandparents and friends who are helping construct the patchwork of care that is necessary for parents to work and provide for their children.

These children are quite literally everyone's future. We must look beyond the isolated confines of individualism towards collective, lest we forget the failure of the 1990s, when there were millions of dollars cut from child-care centres and slashed grants for nursery schools, and the elimination of funding for the Manitoba Child Care Association, reduced grants to child-care facilities, and a freeze on new spaces, and the oh-so-popular increasing parental fees.

It has taken years to move child care up the political agenda. Since 1999, early learning child care funding has tripled to more than

\$147 million, a commitment to create more than 12,000 more child-care spaces, better wages for early childhood educators, lower child-care fees for parents. The gains that this government has made must be preserved. This bill builds on the momentum and the great strides taken toward universal child care in Manitoba. This bill is needed to provide security and stability for children and parents. Ensuring that child-care space will continue to be available for parents is essential, just as it is essential for child-care centres to feel secure in their space in a school.

I can stand here and clarify the relief that parents will feel knowing their children will have a secure child-care spot and a smoother transition to grade school. I can stand here and quote mountains of research eloquently articulating the need to protect child-care centres in public schools. I can further substantiate my position by clearly illustrating the benefits to child—to the child both socially and developmentally. But alas, I do not have that much time afforded to me. So I will leave you with this concluding thought.

We need strong legislation that protects the steps we have taken towards accessible, affordable and high-quality child care. It is time to remove the dollar-and-cents argument and think about the greater good. It is about providing the fundamental learning foundation for children and ensuring optimal success in school.

* (19:40)

I would like to conclude by applauding the NDP government for making child care a priority and taking the steps necessary for a universal child-care program. This mother thanks you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now—Honourable Minister?

Mr. Allum: Well, thank you, Ms. Goertzen. Thank you for coming out tonight.

I know you to have a very difficult, busy job, and I know that you, like any mom, you care deeply about your family as well. And so for you to come out tonight and speak so passionately and so clearly about the need for a universal access to child care, on the one hand, and also to ensure that our child-care centres are built in our schools and there are sensible rules about how they should operate means a great deal to me, not only from you as an advocate in our

community but as a mom. So thank you so much for coming out tonight.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Goertzen, for coming to committee tonight as a mom and as a private citizen, and I can't echo some of the words that you've said already in regards to the struggles that people have to go through, especially over the last 10 or so years in regards to making ends meet and both partners having to go to work to, again, make ends meet. And it is a tough situation when you have to make that decision for child care and that. So I thank you for coming in and giving us your presentation tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank—oh, Mr. Gerrard.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for coming forward, and thank you for your passion.

I think it's important that we move forward, that we make sure that the shortage in spaces are addressed and that we make sure that we don't lose the ones that we've got. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

We'll now call on Susan Prentice. Do you have written materials for the committee tonight? Okay, please proceed when you're ready.

Ms. Susan Prentice (Private Citizen): Good evening. I'm Dr. Susan Prentice. I'm a professor of sociology at the University of Manitoba. My area of research specialty is child care, and it's on the basis of my familiarity with child-care policy that I'm here to speak in favour of the spirit of Bill 7.

The context for this discussion, of course, is that Manitoba has very little child care. You'll know from research evidence that there's a child-care space in Manitoba for about one in five children. You'll know that there's about 12,000 names of children on the waiting list, and you'll know that we're speaking about the roughly 325 child-care centres that are located in Manitoba's schools, and Bill 7 before you is going to ask you how to handle the relationship between these roughly 325 schools and their school boards.

The first thing to say is that putting schools and child care together is an excellent use of public resources. It's an extremely good leveraging of public dollars. It creates real assets and synergies for children and their families. It makes schools community hubs. It helps to maximize public investments. So, for all these reasons, it's an excellent thing to do. It's a trend that's going to continue.

You likely know that there was a Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission that released a report on January 12th which recommends that school boards actually take over and operate school-age child care for children between the ages of six and 12. Minister appears to agree with this. We can assume it's a plan that's going to move forward. And when this happens, child care is no longer going to be a tenant that needs to be treated as a tenant, with respect; it's going to be a new paradigm. But until then, as long as child care is a tenant, Bill 7 provides some very important protections. It permits flexibility. Where warranted, the minister can permit a moving or a close. What it does, most importantly, is mandates communication and co-operation between school boards, the minister and the school board itself. This creates new relationships—supportive, co-operative, collegial—and it's going to help build positive relationships.

Research tells us that close and supportive school and child-care relationships are a hallmark of quality, and you may know that the OECD has recommended that a systematic and integrated approach to early learning and child-care policy and strong and equal partnerships with the education system are hallmarks of quality. So, while we do not yet have that before us for Manitoba, Bill 7 begins to create these relationships and move us towards it.

Manitoba has a very long history in Canada of being a leader in terms of child-care policy and program development, and I would suggest that the bill before you, Bill 7, helps to move that very honourable tradition forward.

There are outstanding questions. I agree with my colleagues who have spoken to the very crucial need for providing adequate notice. I think it's a very reasonable request that at least 24 months be given where full moves are required. But, with these important qualifications aside, Bill 7 is a step in the right direction.

I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Mr. Allum: Well, Dr. Prentice, I certainly appreciate your coming in tonight and sharing your thoughts and your experience and your observations with us.

I know you to be a leading expert on this matter, both nationally and, in fact, internationally, and so it means a great deal to me personally to have you come out tonight to share your observations and share your views and to encourage us to keep

moving in the proper direction when it comes to the provision of a universally accessible child-care system in Manitoba, and one that joins together early childhood education with our education system so that the continuum of education from cradle through to career is taken care of. So, thank you so much for coming tonight.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Dr. Prentice, for sharing your words and as the minister has mentioned, all of your hard work and dedication to this portfolio—or expertise. We do have a long way to go in regards to making sure that we've got good quality child-care services for all those 12,000-plus kids that are on that waiting list. And it is—it's too bad that it's taken this long for this bill to come forward, but at the same time, it is—we are moving forward, so thank you very much.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for coming and presenting and talking about the current situation.

You talked about the 325 schools with the child-care spaces. What proportion of schools do you think should have child-care spaces?

Ms. Prentice: Excellent question. I don't see any reason why there's any school that doesn't have a child-care centre, frankly. So there ought to be at least a hundred per cent. And of course schools—school-based child care will only serve most of our child-care needs. There will still be a need for the allocation of child-care outside of schools as well.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

This concludes the list of presenters I have before me. Are there any other persons in attendance that wish to make a presentation?

Seeing none, that concludes the public presentations.

Mr. Chairperson: In what order does the committee wish to proceed with the clause-by-clause consideration of the bills?

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): First Bill 2 and then second, Bill 7.

Mr. Chairperson: Is that acceptable to the committee? Okay. All agreed? *[Agreed]*

During the consideration of the bill, the preamble, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered by—in their proper order. Also, if there's

an agreement from the committee, I will call the clauses in blocks that conform to pages with the understanding we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members have comments, questions or amendments to propose. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

We will now proceed by clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

**Bill 2—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Small Classes for K to 3)**
(Continued)

Mr. Chairperson: Bill 2—does the minister responsible for Bill 2 have an opening statement?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I do, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to be able to speak today on bill 2, the public schools amendment act, small classes for kindergarten to grade 3.

Our government committed in 2011 to reduce the sizes of kindergarten to grade 3 classes in our public schools, and to maintain them at the level—at that level. We are committed to completing this goal as planned by the start of the 2017-2018 school year.

In each of the years since this initiative has been introduced, we have committed significant funding towards hiring teachers and expanding schools to ensure schools have the space to implement this policy, and those investments have resulted in a substantial drop in class sizes across the province. Operationally, this bill also allows the Minister of Education to set out in regulation the type of information parents will be able to access on class sizes in their children's schools such as the online class size trackers the school divisions are already using.

The benefits of small class sizes are supported both by research and by the direct experience of children and their parents. Students benefit by having teachers better able to manage their classrooms and better able to respond to the needs of the students in their classes. Students have a diverse set of backgrounds and skills when they come into the classroom, and the capacity of the teacher to ensure all students in their class are being academically supported is strengthened when they have fewer students in the classroom.

* (19:50)

With smaller classes, the teacher has more time and greater opportunity to provide individualized attention to each student, allowing them to more

successfully connect with and assist that child to become a successful learner. Studies have shown us that those kindergarten to grade 3 years are critically important at getting students on the path to academic success. Greater individualized attention by a teacher helps to ensure any academic deficiencies are caught and addressed in those first few crucial years at school.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society surveyed a number of its members in fall of 2013 on a number of issues including the impact of small class sizes on a teaching practice. Fully 90 per cent of the K-to-3 teachers surveyed indicated that the small class size has made a positive impact on student engagement with 80 per cent noting a positive impact on student behaviour. When we see results like this, we know we are on the right path to improving academic outcomes for students.

It's important to note that this legislation and the broader policy behind it were not developed in a vacuum. Members of this government understand the importance of proper and effective consultation with the groups directly involved in the education system, and I'm proud to say that we worked hard with our parents in the—partners in the education system to ensure Bill 2 was the best it could be before we introduced it to the Legislature. As part of this process, the Department of Education worked with the provincial oversight committee comprised of several educational stakeholders. The committee includes the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, The Manitoba School Boards Association, the Manitoba Association of School Business Officials and school superintendents through the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents.

We worked with the members of the committee over several months to create a policy and a bill that meets the needs of all stakeholders. The central piece of Bill 2, that school divisions must cap at least 90 per cent of the K-to-3 classes at 20 students or less and the remainder must be at 23 students or less, was developed as a result of the recommendations of the provincial oversight committee and replicates the class size reduction program recently implemented in Ontario.

I'd like to take a moment to review the investment our government has made to date ensuring the policy goals driving the bill are effective and able to succeed. Starting in the 2012-2013 school year, we began providing \$3 million in annual funding. This has since grown to \$16 million in funding for the

2016-2017 school year. By the end of the 2016-2017 school year, we will have invested a total of \$49 million in direct operating funding to support this initiative. This has allowed school divisions to hire hundreds of new teachers to support this initiative all across the province.

With a growing province and increasing enrolment, additional space is required to implement small classes, and as a result we have invested a total of \$44 million that we will build—that will build 72 classrooms in 30 schools across the province. These are the kind of smart, strategic investments which have fundamentally shifted the learning conditions of K-to-3 students across the province. We have 425 more K-to-3 classes since we started down this path. Now 93 per cent of K-to-3 classes are 23 or fewer students and 68 per cent are at 20 or fewer students.

Bill 2 formalizes the commitment we made as a government to reduce K-to-3 class sizes. Bill 2 illustrates the need for steady and thoughtful long-term planning for Manitoba, and our efforts to continue to build an education system that meets the needs of all families and all students.

I'm proud to stand today in support of Bill 2 at this committee and I encourage all members present to support this bill and work to ensure its passage in the upcoming legislative session.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): No, we don't.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

**Bill 7—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Protecting Child Care Space in Schools)**
(Continued)

Mr. Chairperson: We'll now be at—on Bill 7.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 7 have an opening statement?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I do.

I'm pleased to be able to speak today on Bill 7, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools). As all members here know, our government has been focused on meeting the needs of Manitobans by building one of the best early learning and child-care systems in the country. We know early childhood education can have a positive impact on a child's future academic success and we know that accessible child care can have a positive impact on the ability of parents to work, to attend school or to participate in their community.

Schools are often the hub of a community, and our model of locating child-care centres in schools or on school property is rooted in this idea. We have been successful at ensuring additional child-care spaces are built and that families have the flexibility they need when accessing child care.

School divisions benefit as well by having an extra amenity they can offer to parents, a source of future enrolment and an opportunity for incoming students to become acclimated to the school environment. There are approximately 300 child-care centres located in schools or on school property throughout our province. This is a direct result of our legislative efforts several years ago to ensure new school construction projects and major school renovation projects include new space for early learning or child-care facilities. This has led to a significant public investment in building these facilities, growing the number of child-care spaces and giving parents the assurance that their kids are in a safe, healthy, nurturing environment.

We have made a substantial strategic—we have made substantial strategic investments in child care, investments we want to see protected and expanded in the future. Members present will be aware of our government's commitment to the creation of 1,200 new child-care spaces over the next few years. It goes without saying that if we want to reach that goal, we can ill afford to lose valuable child-care spaces where they currently exist.

While we continue to tackle the shortage of child-care spaces in Manitoba, we know finding child-care spaces continues to be a challenge for parents. It is important to ensure that when a family obtains a child-care space we do what we can to minimize the risk of disruption to parents and to their children. Bill 7 clarifies the rules around the allocation of child-care spaces in schools and provides certainty and assurances about what to expect and plan towards. In short, Bill 7 sets out the

conditions under which a child-care centre can be relocated within a school or moved from one school to another.

I want to note that child-care centres, child-care advocates and school boards have been excellent partners over the years including during the creation and drafting of this legislation. There's a broad consensus about the importance of child care for families and the benefits of offering child care in schools. Bill 7 supports this objective by creating a solid structure for this relationship. I'm pleased to note that we have already undertaken a successful consultation process with stakeholders around this bill.

Bill 7 is an integral part of this government's commitment to child care in Manitoba, specifically affordable and high-quality child care that is accessible to all Manitoba families. While the bill itself is relatively short in length, it will have a long-term impact on continuing to build Manitoba into a province that is accessible and welcoming to children, to parents and to all families.

Thank you all for your time, and I hope and urge all members to support this bill.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): No, I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the member.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

The hour being 8 o'clock, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise. The hour being 8 o'clock, committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 7:58 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Re: Bill 2

To The Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development,

I am writing in regard to your debate tonight, specifically on Bill 2, The Public Schools

Amendment Act, which would limit class sizes from Kindergarten to Grade 3 to 23 students.

As a mother of four children (one in elementary, one heading to junior high, and another heading to a high school setting next year), I have seen firsthand the influence of teachers. I know the importance of having engaged teachers who create positive, accepting, learning-centred classes. I recognize that being a teacher is one of the most impactful jobs in society, and I can understand that it must be at least slightly easier with a smaller group of students to give each child the attention he or she needs. For all of these reasons I am, in theory, supportive of this proposed legislation.

I also see the need for implementing ideas with a concrete plan behind them, not just having an idea that sounds good without knowing how to execute it. I have seen how trying to implement smaller class sizes has already caused confusion and safety issues, and for this reason I would exhort all committee members to really think about this bill before giving it a pass just because it looks good on paper.

Trying to accommodate smaller class sizes has really pushed schools to their limits in capacity. Many schools have had to expand by purchasing portable classrooms. This is concerning for a few reasons. The first is for safety. I am aware that after the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012, there were many discussions on the safety of Manitoba school children and what more we could be doing to keep them safe; portable classrooms were repeatedly a source of concern. The second issue is that for some, they create a feeling of separation between the students in them from the rest of the school. As a voter, I cannot wrap my head around the fact that on one hand, schools have been shuttered, and yet on the other, we are paying for less secure, portable classrooms. I'm sure that there is some tally sheet that tells us that it's cheaper, but isn't the government always telling us that education should be sacred and funds not cut? If cuts need to be made, why can't it be in other areas? I do not understand why there are more school trustees in Winnipeg than there are MLAs in Toronto. Why does my daughter's junior high need three (or even four) secretaries when my high school only had one? Why doesn't money get allocated to the most effective things?

Beyond the portable classroom "fix", schools are utilizing other spaces. I'm all for using space that doesn't have a purpose, but relocating students to a cafeteria or library for homeroom, or giving up a

science lab to create space for another classroom because the limit has been reached and so now there are two classes of thirteen instead of one of 26, seems to be giving up something better for something good. While the ideal is small class sizes, shouldn't kids have the opportunity to be in real classrooms and learn science hands-on in a lab instead of just reading about it at their desks?

These decisions impact all levels of school, not just the elementary. (Though I agree with having grade nine in with the rest of the high school grades, space is already at a premium for undersized schools.) For example, my daughter would like to go to a certain high school for their programs offered which are vastly different from her designated school. She has been told that the likelihood of her getting into her school of choice is very small; even if she does get in and then decides at any point in her high school career that the program isn't for her, she will almost certainly be kicked out and sent to her designated school, forcing her to readjust both academically and socially. This has happened because numbers and space are so tight due to the influx of new Grade 9 students moving from junior high to accommodate the Grade 6 kids who are moving to make room for already smaller classes in elementary. The stress of trying to make the right decision for her next four years is more than a thirteen year old should have to bear. You'd think she was choosing a university major.

Beyond the everyday issues that this law could create, what is the cost to implement this? I know education is important, but we all know in the real world, budgets are (or at least should be) a major consideration and wise investments are important. Though class sizes are important and I have said previously that I don't think budgets should be cut, I also don't want them to balloon unnecessarily. I feel that other services and resources-such a school therapists- are more important than the magic number of 23. Struggling students are waiting inexcusably long times to get the help that they require, and, if problems aren't severe, kids are waiting months-and sometimes years- for help. Just yesterday, I spoke to the staff at a junior high and was told that they have had students on the list to see someone about their academic struggles since October and still haven't gotten word on if or when someone will be even able to come and meet those kids. Students who are struggling but aren't considered the worst cases keep getting put off and get lost in the process until they are so far behind that

they and their parents want to give up. Having resource and therapy staff for students is a far better investment, in my opinion, than having a few less students in the class and honestly, reflecting upon it, I wonder if reducing classroom sizes is trying to treat a symptom and not the root cause of the issue.

I understand that small classrooms are the ideal, but does it need to be legislated? Are there alternatives to making the class size mandatory? Could any exceptions or accommodations be made? If it's not feasible, what are the alternatives that will work? Could educational assistants be put into classrooms with more than 23 students but less than 30, for example?

What is the plan? Unless there is a concrete plan to implement Bill 2 that will keep students safe, disruption to the minimum, and services and spaces for their designated and highest use, then I would urge the members of the committee to vote against it. I also hope that everyone on the committee can put aside their political stripes for the evening and focus on what the right decision is, and how to make it happen. Our children are counting on you to do the right thing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Rachelle Ladd

Re: Bill 7

Dear Clerk of Committees:

Sugar-N-Spice Kiddie Haven, Inc. currently has two centres located within schools in the Seven Oaks School Division and a third centre currently under construction in the new École Riviere Rouge. Our two centres currently offer care for 14 infants, 113 preschool children and 87 school age children in the community. We also employ 46 staff members including 5 inclusion staff who work with children with additional support needs.

Our two existing sites have benefited greatly from being co-located within schools. Our École Riverbend site operates a school-age program and utilizes common space within the school (gymnasium, library, computer room) for our programming. The École Riverbend site has also been very accommodating with sharing ongoing maintenance costs associated with the playground as school children also have access to it. We have also been able to use the school gymnasium for

fundraising activities and other special events. For our parents, the transition from daycare to kindergarten is much easier as the children are used to the school environment. In addition, our staff can interact with the teachers and assist should issues arise. This interaction has proven very beneficial for our inclusion children and staff in the daycare. This relationship is further enhanced as our staff can eat their lunch and take breaks in the teachers' lounge. The West Kildonan Collegiate location has had high school students come and interact with the children as part of their academic learning. All of the above examples have helped build a stronger relationship as a result of being co-located within schools.

It is recognized that the student population continues to grow within the Seven Oaks School Division and that tremendous physical space pressures exist. However, in order to continue operating and provide a valuable service to the community, we require these child care spaces to be available for the continued operation of our program. Therefore, the Board of Directors and Management of Sugar-N-Spice Kiddie Haven Inc. support Bill 7 - The Public Schools Amendment Act (Protecting Child Care Space in Schools).

Thank you.

Yours truly,
David Hay
Chairperson

Re: Bill 7

To: Standing Committees on Social and Economic Development

Please accept this letter as my written support for amendments to Bill 7 (protecting child care space in schools). I am writing this letter as a parent and as a childcare director. My children are 10 and 2 years old and I have worked as a director at Harrow Co-op Children's Centre Inc. since 2007.

As a parent, nine years ago, making the decision on who will care for my child while I was at work was a big decision to make and I had to consider many options. I remember worrying about making the transition between daycare and school as pleasant and as simple as possible for my child. At that time, I wanted to offer my child simplicity and comfort, I wanted to find a childcare center in close proximity to my work and my home and I didn't want to travel too long in each direction, or expose my little one to

too many transitions in a day. I wanted her to have the best of both worlds: I wanted my child to be able to grow and learn and create friendships in a place that she can bond with her peers, feel safe and comfortable and get to know the teachers, subs and early childhood educators who would be part of her life. I wanted stability and I wanted peace of mind that in winter time, even when it is -40* degrees Celsius, she can still go to school and learn and I can still go to work. I wanted all those things, and I know from my experience as a childcare director, that many, if not all parents, want the same thing for their children. I was lucky enough to find what I was looking for: I found a childcare center located in a school and have peace of mind knowing that my child is safe, secure, and is growing and learning each and every day in two loving environments that have her best interests at heart. I know my child can move freely and seamlessly between the childcare center and the school, and that she enjoys the public resources her school offers such as the school library, their gym and the playgrounds. I know that because her childcare center and her school have a great relationship, and each party respects and values the work they do, my child can benefit from these resources year round and she will continue to go attend this school and daycare center until she moves on to high school.

I am also glad that when I have to go through this process again with my younger child, I will again have peace of mind that my child can start a daycare housed by a school where he can learn and grow each and every day with minimal transitions and very few disruptions to his day. I know he will progress through the middle years in a school big enough to grow but small enough to literally walk less than 100 steps to get to his future classrooms.

I know that my child will get to see his sister as she walks the school hallways and he will get to know his future teachers as he will walk the school hallways to get to the library, gym, rec room, etc.

I wish that all parents in this city can have the same peace of mind that I do each and every day. This peace of mind allows me to go to work and focus on my work daily. Now, imagine if the school my daughter currently attends, no longer wishes to accommodate her childcare center. Imagine the chaos this would cause me and my family if the childcare center no longer existed in this school, or if for whatever reason, this center's license would change and my child is not able to continue at that

daycare. I would have to look for another school that could accommodate my needs.

I do support the amendments to Bill 7 and I believe it would be beneficial to have these amendments added to the bill. I fully support that more than one person or organization should have a say in this enormous change and the impact it can make on families. Schools should not be able to remove childcare centers from their locations, just because they need the space. Schools should not be able to give a 90 day notice to a childcare center just because they want their rooms back. Schools should be held responsible that in a case where they want their spaces back, they should offer a new space which must meet new licensing regulations and must allow for the same number of licensed spaces as it presently operates under.

As a childcare director in a daycare located in a middle school, I see the importance and benefits of having a childcare centers located right inside the schools. Childcare centers in schools ensure children move seamlessly between child care and school and allow children to grow and learn in an environment that they're familiar with. Children with older siblings get to see and visit with one another during the school day and that strengthens the bond between families. Parents want the peace of mind that their children can continue with their education on cold days because the daycare teachers can walk them down the hall to the classroom.

Childcare centers go through extensive licensing procedures to receive an operating license. Harrow Co-op Children's Centre Inc. was established more than 30 years ago and through the process of grandfathering, it is exempt from some newer regulations (such as space per child). Relocating Harrow Co-op Children's Centre Inc. would require the facility to apply for a new operating license and this would affect the families whose children already attend the childcare facility, possibly some of our staff, and definitely the number of licensed spaces.

The change would also affect the school as some schools depend on the childcare center's enrollment to feed into their classes.

When I first took the position as a director, I was told that that school is on the verge of closing as it didn't have enough children enrolled. Since then, I have made it a policy to give priority to children enrolled in Harrow School when filling our vacant childcare spaces because I have heard of families moving to a different area, or enrolling their children in

a different school because of childcare spaces availability. Because of our presence in the school, the school's enrollment has increased and families count on our spaces when enrolling their children in the school.

It is important that all school divisions in the city understand the extensive licensing process a center goes through to receive a license to operate and the importance of schools and childcare centers co-existing. Natural light, play and free space, the location of the rooms, the number of exits, toilets, sinks and air ventilation are just a handful of requirements they must meet and pass in order to receive a license to operate. Moving centers or relocating them will definitely affect the license and the existing spaces and all families involved. Bill 7 should say that schools cannot move, relocate, decrease, or change the existing number of licensed spaces without approval from the Minister himself. If relocation is approved, the new space offered to the center, must meet new licensing regulations and must allow for the same number of licensed spaces, that is a very important point to remember.

Please pass the amendments suggested to Bill 7, so that there is more than one person or entity responsible for making such drastic changes. Without childcare Canada can't work!

Sincerely,
Mihaela Mujcinovic

Re: Bill 7

My name is Lori Schroen and I speak in favour of Bill 7 – The Protecting Child Care Space in Schools Act.

Thank you for holding this meeting to hear from the public, and for taking the time to listen my thoughts.

As a bit of a background, I have worked in child care for forty years as an Early Childhood Educator. I have worked at Fort Rouge Co-operative Day Nursery since 1981. I am here today to speak on behalf of CUPE Local 1543 of which I have served as President for twenty years. CUPE Local 1543 represents child care workers at seven separate child care facilities, including Garderie les petits amis Day Care at École Pointe-des-Chênes. I have also represented Manitoba on CUPE's National Child Care Working group for the past fifteen years. I also serve as Co-Chair of CUPE Manitoba's Social Services/Child Care Committee and am a member of

the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba's steering committee.

In short, I have spent my working life as both an early learning child care worker and an advocate for universal, affordable, not-for-profit, regulated, and high quality early learning and child care.

I support early learning and child care not only because I enjoy the work, but because it is good for children, it is good for their families, and it is good for society as a whole.

Numerous studies have shown that early learning and child care programs lead to improved education, health and social outcomes. Children benefit from participating in stimulation, and fun education that encourages lifelong learning. It helps children develop social skills, and provides opportunities to make friends.

Access to licensed, affordable, high quality child care can lead to monumental improvements in the lives of parents as well. Child care gives parents options – allowing them the opportunity to access training and education. It gives parents the opportunity to return to work, and in some cases to take a first job. Every day I hear from parents whose lives have improved, and in turn their children's lives have improved because of access to child care.

Sadly, I also hear from parents who are desperate to access child care, and the lack thereof keeps them from returning to school or the workforce.

While the Quebec child care system has its own challenges, the reality is that Quebec's introduction of a universal, quality and accessible public child care led to higher tax revenues and lower spending, primarily associated with increased workforce participation of mothers. The benefits of universal childcare were especially important for single mothers. In Quebec the income of single mothers grew significantly, poverty rates plummeted, and the number of single mothers on welfare was cut in half.

Investing in public early learning and child care isn't just good for parents and children though – it is good for society as a whole. Child care allows people with skills to take up jobs – helping local business meet their labour needs, and growing our economy.

Universal early learning and child care is not only a good idea from a social justice perspective – it just makes good economic sense.

While there is still work to be done here in Manitoba, we are miles ahead of where we were in the 1990's.

I remember the days of cuts to child care centres and when the licencing of new spaces were frozen. I remember when the daily subsidy fee was raised on low-income parents. And I remember when the decision was made to cut off the parental subsidy after only two weeks of unemployment – interrupting children's routines, removing them from their friends, and making it even harder for their parents to re-enter the workforce. I also remember when the government of the day tried to shut out child care advocates and eliminate critical research by defunding the Manitoba Child Care Association. Those were bad times for child care workers and the parents and kids who depended on us.

I am happy to say that this government has been on a consistent path of building a high quality, publicly-funded, non-profit system of early learning and child care. As an experienced early childhood educator, I have seen the positive results of Manitoba's investment in early learning and child care in both the children I educate and care for, and in the lives of their families.

While I personally do not work in a facility located in a school, I am aware that over 50% of early learning and child care facilities in Manitoba are located inside schools. There are good public policy issues for locating child care facilities inside schools – though of course we should continue to support not-for-profit facilities that exist in the larger community in places such as community clubs, places of worship, workplaces, and the like.

However, if we are going to have a progressive, universal child care program, it is essential that government support school-based early learning and childcare programs. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how Manitoba will reach its stated goal of adding 12,000 new child care spaces without making greater use of already existing infrastructure in the public school system. It only makes sense that if we are going to expand child care that we take steps to secure existing facilities, and the future of those yet to be established. We are in agreement with the 2016 Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission report recommendation that School Divisions take on responsibility for school age child care, and are glad to see this government has initiated plans to introduce pilot projects in Seine River and Seven Oaks School Division.

That is why I am in support of Bill 7 – The Protecting Child Care Space in Schools Act. This Bill is about creating stability and security. Stability

and security for children in programs, for parents who depend on them, and for their workers who provide these important services.

This Bill ensures facilities that child care facilities will not face the threat of eviction, a reduction in space, or being forced to move without warning or recourse.

Under this Bill, the ultimate decision to move a childcare facility to a different school will rest in the hands of the Minister, who we trust will fully consider the impact on children, their families, and

child care workers and balance these needs with the legitimate needs of school divisions. We are hopeful that this Bill will provide the security and stability that child care facilities must have in order to meet the needs of children, their parents, and their employees.

Once again, thank you for providing me with this opportunity to address this committee.

Lori Schroen
President of the Canadian Union of Public
Employees Local 1543

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>