

Third Session – Forty-Second Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Social and Economic Development

Chairperson
Mr. Andrew Micklefield
Constituency of Rossmere

Vol. LXXV No. 3 - 6 p.m., Thursday, December 3, 2020

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Woleseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

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

Thursday, December 3, 2020

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

**CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Andrew Micklefield
(Rossmere)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Janice
Morley-Lecomte (Seine River)**

ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mmes. Cox, Stefanson

Ms. Adams, Mr. Micklefield,

Ms. Morley-Lecomte, Mrs. Smith

APPEARING:

Hon. Jon Gerrard, MLA for River Heights

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

*Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty
Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy for the
fiscal year ending March 31, 2018*

*Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty
Reduction Strategy for the fiscal year ending
March 31, 2019*

*Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty
Reduction Strategy for the fiscal year ending
March 31, 2020*

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: –come to order.

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

Are there any nominations?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I nominate Janice Morley-Lecomte as Vice-Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Morley-Lecomte has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Ms. Morley-Lecomte is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the following reports: Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018; Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction Strategy for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2019; Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction Strategy for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020.

Before we get started, are there any suggestions from the committee as to how long we should sit this evening?

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Hi, I move that committee rise at 7 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved that committee rises at 7 p.m. Is that the will of the committee?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other suggestions?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

An Honourable Member: So we'd like to see–

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Adams, I saw you first.

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Mrs. Smith can answer.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): We'd like to see the committee rise at 8 p.m. or when we've exhausted our questions.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been proposed that the committee rises at 8 p.m. or when questions have been exhausted.

Is it the will of the committee to rise at 8 p.m. or when questions are exhausted?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Are there any other suggestions?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): Mr. Chair, I would suggest that we just revisit at 7 o'clock at that time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Minister Stefanson.

It has been suggested that the committee revisit at 7 p.m.

Is that the will of the committee to revisit at 7 p.m.?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Are there any other suggestions?

Mrs. Smith: We are reviewing three years of poverty reports. Usually this report gets tabled every year and we get to come to committee every year. So this is unprecedented times, I agree, but two hours for three reports I think is reasonable, or until we've exhausted our questions.

Mr. Chairperson: In an attempt to avoid an impasse here, I'm going to suggest that the committee sits 'til 7:30 and then we'd reconsider at that time.

Is there a willingness to do that? Hearing no opposition, that's the plan that we will go with.

Are there suggestions as to the order in which we should consider reports?

Before we go—move in that direction, I actually am required to hear a yes to the suggestion that the committee sits 'til 7:30 and then considers the best course of action.

Is there agreement to do that?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Hearing a yes, that will be the direction that we take for the evening. Are there suggestions—

An Honourable Member: Mr. Chair, could I just get clarification?

Mr. Chairperson: Minister Stefanson.

Mrs. Stefanson: So we'll sit until 7:30 and then we review at that time what the will of the committee is? Is that correct?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, that was just the question that was answered and I only heard a yes, and so that is the course of action.

An Honourable Member: So it will be reviewed at 7:30.

Mr. Chairperson: It will be reviewed at 7:30.

Are there any suggestions as to the order in which we should consider the reports? *[interjection]*

Minister Stefanson.

Mrs. Stefanson: I would just say sequentially.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

It has been suggested the reports be considered sequentially.

Is there agreement to consider them sequentially?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

An Honourable Member: Agreed. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Smith: If we do go sequentially, we're going to be going year by year, which I think is going to take us—take longer than 7:30. I would suggest that we go in a global manner where we can ask questions on different topics within those reports.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been suggested by Mrs. Smith to go in a global manner, allowing for consideration of topics in all reports. Is there agreement to consider the reports in a global manner? *[Agreed]*

It seems there is agreement to proceed with the reports in a global manner. We will go in that direction.

Does the honourable minister wish to make an opening statement?

Mrs. Stefanson: I do, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister. Please go ahead, minister.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm honoured to be with all of you this evening for consideration of the three reports on Poverty Reduction Strategy. My comments tonight will be primarily on the consideration of the 2019-20 Poverty Reduction Strategy Annual Report as I've already commented on the other two and we look forward to their passage tonight.

This report shows our progress over the past year on the key indicators and Pathways to a Better Future, Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

* (18:10)

As Manitobans know, we inherited a mess from the previous NDP government on poverty and social outcomes for families. Under their watch, Manitoba

was the child poverty capital of Canada. The number of children in CFS care doubled. Child care was less available for families who needed it, and income inequality was a persistent problem for our entire province. Their failed record reflects what Manitobans know already and why they elected us to two majority governments: that the Progressive Conservative Party is the party of hope, freedom and prosperity. In contrast, the NDP are the party of fear, stagnation and dependency.

I am proud to inform the committee that we are turning the corner on that legacy where nine of the 13 indicators in Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy are either stable or making progress. The more—the most important of those indicators is arguably the poverty rate itself, which has dropped by 22.5 per cent overall and by over of 31 per cent for children, compared with the previous government.

Manitoba has also seen a 4.6 per cent decrease in income inequality, compared with 2015. This is a direct result of our focus on tax relief for Manitobans. Since 2016, we have provided Manitoba families and small businesses with \$700 million in tax relief, a package of measures that includes indexing the basic personal amounts and personal income tax brackets so that Manitobans are not taxed more as the cost of living increases; reducing the PST by one point, saving Manitobans \$325 million this year alone; removing the sales tax from will preparation; removing the sales tax from home and commercial property insurance; and reducing vehicle registration fees.

The measures contained in Budget 2020 have resulted in Manitoba families receiving an \$812 tax break, with total tax savings of nearly \$406 million across Manitoba this year alone. And while Manitoba families thrive as a result of policies that put money back in their pockets, their children are also doing better than they ever did under the previous government.

I am proud to report to this committee that our government has reduced the number of children in CFS care for the third year in a row. There are now 865 fewer children in care than there were in 2017, a direct consequence of our government's investments in child welfare and community-based prevention. Budget 2020 includes over \$400 million for CFS agencies and authorities as part of our single-envelope funding approach, which is proven to reduce the number of children in care by no longer providing financial incentives to apprehend Manitoba's children.

Effective July 1st, we also ended the practice of birth alerts in Manitoba through a new emphasis on early prevention by CFS authorities and agencies.

Our government also understands that child care is critical to our economic recovery and growth, which is why we're investing significantly in our child-care system. Budget 2020 invests \$181 million in the child-care system in Manitoba, almost \$20 million more than the NDP ever invested in child care during their time in office. Since forming government, we have created nearly 2,500 new spaces through our capital program, and we are investing \$22 million this year in innovative new programs to expand the number of spaces available to parents who need child care. Because of these record investments, our government has made progress on another key indicator: increasing the availability of licensed child care for Manitoba families across our province.

'Finey'—finally, I'd like to commend my colleague, the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen) and vice-chair of the Poverty Reduction Committee, who has done excellent work improving school attendance and fixing our education system. As a result of his efforts, Manitoba can report further progress on our high school graduation rates, with 82 per cent of Manitoba high school students now graduating on schedule.

While we have made significant progress, it's important to remember that the 1920—the 19—sorry, the 2019-20 Poverty Reduction Strategy reflects the results we had achieved before the COVID-19 pandemic. We all know that 2020 has been a challenging year for Manitoba families. Our province has experienced hardships that it has not seen in a generation.

Our province has experienced hardships that—this morning, sorry, the opposition spent their time trying to score political points with baseless allegations about our pandemic response for low-income and other vulnerable Manitobans. This is just more fearmongering from a party that is out of ideas.

In fact, since the beginning of the pandemic, the Department of Families has worked tirelessly to provide support to those who need it the most.

On EIA, the decision to treat the new federal recovery benefits as earned income for existing EIA clients and all clients in the disability category is helping us put more money in Manitobans' pockets, maintain health benefits and provide more support for people with disabilities. It complements the

\$4.6 million we invested in Manitoba's Disability Economic Support Program and the \$45 million we invested in the Seniors Economic Recovery Credit.

On homelessness, we have invested \$3.5 million in expanded shelter capacity at Main Street Project, Salvation Army, Siloam Mission and Resource Assistance for Youth and Samaritan House in Brandon. We have also opened 14 alternative isolation accommodation sites across the province for homeless Manitobans who need to isolate due to COVID-19, including a 138-bed facility opened just this week.

On food security, our government has invested over \$4 million in the Home Nutrition and Learning Pilot Program, a community-based program providing nutritious breakfast food and recipe materials to 3,400 children every week.

On the disability sector, recent investments and a new recruitment campaign, along with a \$35-million Caregiver Wage Support Program and the \$10-million Pandemic Staffing Support Benefit are ensuring that our most vulnerable citizens continue to receive the care they deserve during this pandemic.

And on child care, we continue to make record investments in PPE and staffing support grants for the sector, including \$90 million in provincial operating grants, \$2.4 million for the COVID-19 Response Grant and \$8.5 million in start-up grants administered by the Winnipeg and Manitoba chambers of commerce.

While our government believes that these supports are necessary to help Manitobans get through this pandemic, we also want to assure Manitobans that these supports, and the lockdown conditions that necessitated them, are temporary.

Unlike the NDP, Mr. Chair, we look forward to the day when Manitobans can provide for themselves and their families without depending on government for support. And if we continue to work together and follow public health advice, I am confident that day will come very soon.

In closing, I'd like to thank all of the members of the Poverty Reduction Committee for their work on this report and their continued dedication to our province during this very challenging time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. That concludes my remarks.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the honourable minister.

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

Ms. Adams: Yes, I do.

It's my pleasure to join you today. I realize this has been challenging times, and I appreciate efforts made to these proceedings to be remote.

Unfortunately, this will be the last time this committee meets on its annual report in the way that Pallister's government—the Pallister government has legislated away that responsibility. We believe that is a mistake and a missed opportunity to be accountable to the public.

As the minister will see, we have a number of questions related to their transparency and accountability on several measures put forward by—to the committee. In no particular order, we have concerns in—with the following measures: the minister and this report takes credit for expansion of spaces within the child-care facility that are unfunded; we are concerned that the public is not being properly informed about how many daycare spaces are actually receiving provincial funding; we are deeply concerned about the number of children in care and how—the minister's accounting for the children in care.

We have some direct questions that will urge the minister to be straightforward with her response.

We also have some real concerns about Manitoba's declining ranking among the provinces when it comes to poverty, including a basket measure—the Market Basket Measure. National trends and the federal benefit have helped Manitobans overall, but Manitoba's standing among the provinces has sunk like a stone.

* (18:20)

We are also deeply concerned about the current and future changes the minister is making to child care in this province. This is especially true for the inclusion support program for children with exceptional needs. There has been a number of changes made to this area and I am hoping the minister will be forthcoming in her answers to our questions. We have other questions as well on the issue as it relates to poverty in Manitoba.

I look forward to our debate tonight and hearing direct responses from the minister.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

The floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Adams: On page 7 of the annual poverty reduction report, it says that, regards to child care, the Province is providing operating subsidies for 744 new, unfunded expansion spaces across the province.

Can the minister clarify: What does it refer to, child-care spaces within an existing licensed, funded facility that creates new spaces when those spaces have yet to receive operating funding? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Minister Stefanson, sorry, I just need to recognize you for Hansard.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry about that. I'm just getting the report in front of me.

Yes, those were—those are spaces that are now newly funded spaces, as a result of our expansion of spaces across the province.

Ms. Adams: I raise that this has been an issue in the minister's own annual reporting in the last few years. The definition of what is a funded space has changed to include any space within a child-care facility. If that is a—if the daycare receives any government funding regardless of the space itself, it is actually receiving funding on the operating subsidy.

So, can the minister confirm that the new spaces are all receiving the provincial operating grant? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Minister Stefanson, just give me a wave or let me know when you want to speak.

Mrs. Stefanson: Sorry. Newbie.

So, there has been no change in reporting, so I'm not quite sure—I'm not following where the member is going with this line of questioning. There's been no changes in how this has been reported.

Ms. Adams: If the minister will just give me one moment and I will table a document for the minister.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Adams, I would just ask you to email the moderator a PDF of your tabled document, please. If you could acknowledge to me that you heard me and you can do that, that would be helpful.

Ms. Adams: Yes. No, I'm doing it right now.

Mr. Chairperson: Excellent. Thank you.

Ms. Adams: I've tabled the document.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Adams, thank you for tabling the document. The document has been received.

Ms. Adams, have you emailed the document to the minister?

Ms. Adams: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Ms. Adams, you don't need to email the document to the minister. The clerks have kindly agreed to do that for you. They are making sure now that the minister will receive the document.

We're learning as we go here. We'll get there.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Chair, I—yes, I have yet to receive the document that the member's referring to, but certainly I'll be happy to wait until we receive that document.

Mrs. Smith: So, my question is regarding CFS.

On the report, on page 19, the government claims that there are 9,849 children in care of the CFS system.

I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how many children are in receipt of EIA health benefits and also are in the care of CFS. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Minister Stefanson. *[interjection]* That's okay.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank the member for the question.

And regardless of, I guess, how many kids are on EIA that are in care and these not—these questions that she's asking, the fact of the matter is is that, for the last three years in a row, we've had a reduction in the number of children in care, and that was after something that, back in, you know, in the previous NDP government, that the member referred to this morning as the glorious days of the previous NDP government. They doubled the number of kids in care.

So, Mr. Chair, I'm not sure, again, where the member is going with this, but we're pretty proud of the fact that we're working with those agencies and authorities to ensure that we're getting the preventative programs in place to help the people to ensure that we reduce the number of kids in the care of CFS.

And, to me, that is the important thing here.

Mrs. Smith: Miigwech, Dep—or Mr. Speak—or Mr. uh Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: You can call me Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Smith, go ahead. Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Smith, I cannot hear you.

Mrs. Smith: We've seen—

Mr. Chairperson: Mrs. Smith, I'm sorry. I can't hear you.

Mrs. Smith: Hello?

Mr. Chairperson: Now I can hear you. I may interrupt you again if I cannot hear you. I didn't hear anything you said before I spoke.

Mrs. Smith, why don't we just maybe make sure everything's connected properly and let's try that again.

Mrs. Smith: Can you hear me now?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, I can. Go ahead.

Mrs. Smith: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So, where I'm going with this line of questioning is we've seen the discrepancy in how many kids are being reported in care versus how many kids are receiving EIA medical benefits.

I know first-hand from many families contacting me that they are in care of children that are, in fact, receiving EIA medical benefits but are receiving zero support from any agencies, but are expected to take care of these children.

I had a family that I dealt with, I guess for about three or four months, that were taking care of two children for over a year that were not their children; they were a neighbour's child—or children, and all the agency provided was a set of bed-bunk beds for this family.

* (18:30)

No financial support for food. No financial support for clothing. Nothing. So this is why I'm asking this minister this question because they're not being transparent in how many kids are actually in care under CFS versus how many kids they're reporting.

So I'd ask the minister again to let us know how many kids are actually in care and how many kids are in receipt of EIA, and why there's such a discrepancy in those two numbers. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Minister Stefanson.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You know, the member opposite seems to be referring to an individual case which is probably inappropriate to be having discussions in a committee, a standing committee of the Legislature. But if she has more details with respect to that individual case, we'd be happy to look into it for her.

What I will say is that we're cleaning up, continuing to clean up the mess of the previous NDP government when it comes to child welfare in the province of Manitoba. This was a system that was devolved out to Indigenous authorities back in the time, and they are the ones that we get our numbers from. They report to us the number of children in care, and that hasn't changed, Mr. Chair.

And so if she is somehow going after the authorities and the agencies and suggesting that they're somehow fudging their numbers, I would suggest that the member opposite be very careful where she is going with this; that certainly there's annual reports that are tabled within those individual authorities themselves, and that's where we get our numbers from, based on an annual basis. So, the member opposite knows that. It's been the same.

And finally we're making some progress here. And I think the important thing is that we are making progress for those Manitoba families, for those children. We want to reduce the number of children in care. We want to ensure that children can remain with their loving families. And that's what we're trying to do. And that's what is happening right now, Madam Speaker, for the third year in a row we've managed to reduce the number of children in care.

Now, we recognize that there's still more work to be done, and we will continue to clean up the significant mess that we inherited by the previous NDP government because we're committed to those families in Manitoba and doing what's in their best interest.

Mrs. Smith: So, we have sent documents in that have the actual numbers from the report. So, in the report before us, it also says that last year, there were 10,714 children in CFS care for the year ending March 31st, 2019, yet briefing notes to the minister say that there were in fact 12,845 children in receipt of EIA health benefits in the care of Child and Family Services. That's quite a significant difference. That's a difference of 2,131 children.

Can the minister explain why there would have been 12,845 children in care in receipt of EIA health

benefits on March 31st, 2019, yet the minister's records only report 10,714 children in care?

Mr. Chairperson: Minister Stefanson.

Mrs. Stefanson: I got it right, Mr. Chair, there we go, there's hope.

Well, again, Mr. Chair, the member opposite is just wrong. And I don't know what part of this she doesn't understand. But for the three years in a row, and those are the reports that are before us today, we show a reduction in the number of children in care for the [inaudible].

And I would suggest that if the member opposite and her colleagues choose not to pass these tonight, that that is a reflection on the hard work that is done by those agencies and authorities out there and the families themselves who are making progress in this area, Madam Speaker.

And so I would hope that the member opposite is looking forward to passing this, because we are moving in the right direction. We continue to clean up the mess of the previous NDP government.

Now, I know the member opposite doesn't want to hear it because they go back to those, as she said, you know, this morning—those glorious days of the previous NDP government. Well, what was glorious about those days, Mr. Chair? Was it the fact that they doubled the number of children in care at that time? Was that—were those the glorious days of the previous NDP government? I would say that those are not very glorious days.

Thankfully, Mr. Chair, those glorious days are behind us and certainly, under our government, Manitoba's best days are yet to come.

Mr. Chairperson: Mrs. Smith? Mrs. Smith, I'm sorry, again, we cannot hear you. Maybe make sure that your mute is off and everything is connected properly.

Mrs. Smith: Can you hear me now?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, I can hear you now.

Mrs. Smith: Well, let's talk about the glorious days now, where this government has put financial strain on agencies with their block funding model that are forcing agencies to make decisions that they wouldn't otherwise be making because this government continually underfunds these agencies.

Let me give you an example: an agency that, let's say, November 1st has 268 kids in care. All of a

sudden, let's say December 1st comes. They all of a sudden get 50 new kids that they have come in care. Well, Mr. Chair, this agency has to underfund these extra 50 kids that come in care because they don't have the extra funds because this government is only giving them a certain amount based on how many kids were in care at that time, which I think has led to a lot of what we're seeing.

This government isn't being transparent. They're hiding numbers. And they talk about working with agencies—well, let me tell you, when I was the Families critic, all the agencies that I talked to were not happy with this government and how they were treating them and the funding that they were giving and what they were forcing them to do, which was really putting them in a corner and underfunding the supports—especially with reunification and prevention. Those come at the end, if they have any dollars left.

This is what this government has done. And they're proud of that?

Let me tell you, I don't know why this government continues to want to hide these numbers, but I think it's important that this minister is really clear about this. The minister sticks to her reporting that there are only 10,714 children in care last year, and 9,849 this year. By the minister's own briefing notes there's still thousands of kids that are unaccounted for.

So, are these kids that are living with family, that aren't getting support, but are receiving EIA? Like, why won't the minister tell us? Where are these extra kids, and why aren't they being funded from the Province and why are they only receiving EIA health benefits? Why is she hiding this? I don't get it. Why would you not want to tell—you know, be transparent to Manitobans? You had 12,000—over 12,000 kids in care. You are hiding numbers, and this isn't fair. It's not fair to Manitobans.

And the minister can shake her head all she wants, but this is about keeping kids safe and making sure that we know where these kids are, that they're getting properly funded and that they have the resources to go back home. If they're living with a family member, great. But, you know, the thing is this government shouldn't be hiding that.

So again, I'll ask the minister: Can the minister explain why there's thousands more children in care enrolled in the EIA health benefits than the minister says that are in care?

Mr. Chairperson: And just as a reminder to all members to make their comments through the Chair and not directly using words like you must or you should.

Mrs. Stefanson: Certainly, what Manitobans want is results when it comes to children in care in the province of Manitoba.

* (18:40)

We've heard loud and clear from communities that they want the ability to look after their own children. And that's exactly what we're doing. We're keeping families together in the province of Manitoba, unlike members opposite, back in the glorious days of the previous NDP government, when they doubled the number of children in care at the time, ripping children away from families at the time.

That was what they did. That was their legacy. And, thankfully, we've turned the corner, Mr. Chair, and we have worked with community organizations to ensure that we've been able to get some positive results, a reduction in the number of kids in care, for the last three years in a row.

When it comes to the single-envelope funding, we did a pilot project back in 2017 where we saw a reduction of 18 per cent of the number of children that were apprehended and the number of children in care as a result of that pilot project. That's why we moved into single-envelope funding across CFS care. And as a result of that, we are seeing positive results and a reduction of the number of children in care. That is good news.

Back in the glorious days of the previous NDP government, that was bad news when they doubled the number of kids in care. Thankfully, we've changed that practice of the perverse incentivization of the apprehension of kids that took place in those glorious years under the previous NDP government. And we're getting positive results now for Manitoba families.

Beyond that, the member opposite is absolutely incorrect. We are making investments with community organizations that are making a significant difference to these children in the communities. We invested in early intervention and prevention initiatives, including \$1 million for a community helpers initiative to prevent child apprehensions.

We also invested in \$400,000 for Granny's House, which provides 24-7 respite care for at-risk families. We also invested \$400,000 for the Mothering Project

administered by Mount Carmel Clinic to project mentorship and support to at-risk mothers.

These are some of the investments that we're working with community to ensure that we can reduce the number of children who are apprehended into the CFS system. That is the right thing to do, and we will continue to make progress as we work with community members to ensure we reduce the number of kids in care and that we keep kids with families, where they should be.

Mrs. Smith: Well, the right thing to do would be to tell Manitobans why there's a discrepancy in these numbers. I don't believe that we've heard a satisfactory answer from this minister, and that's because the real issue is that the minister relies exclusively on the provincial Child and Family Services information system, which we know, over a year ago, there was a breach in there.

Someone had hacked—I don't remember if it was the southern network of care or the southern authority, but that system was hacked. A system the Auditor General has called out-of-date, not complete, and not accurate. It has meant that thousands of children in care are not counted in the minister's annual reporting. Isn't that so, Minister?

Mr. Chairperson: Again, I would like to remind all members, but Mrs. Smith, you must put your questions through the Chair, and no member can direct another question directly at another member. It must be done through the Chair.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, the member opposite refuses to acknowledge that we are making progress in this area where they failed back in the glorious days of the previous NDP government. And it's unfortunate, Mr. Chair, that that's what—that that is what has transpired.

But, what I will say is, what the member opposite is saying does not make logical sense. There are people and families who are on EIA, who maybe whose kids are in care at the time, but then they are no longer in care, but those families may still be on EIA.

So, you're not always going to—you're comparing apples to oranges here. And this is an absolutely ridiculous line of questioning, frankly. And I think it's just—I think what it is, though, Mr. Chair, is that it's a reflection of the fact that members opposite just don't want to acknowledge that we are making significant progress when it comes to our child-welfare system.

And I know the members opposite say they love to go back to the glorious days of the NDP government where they doubled the number of kids in care. I will tell you, Mr. Chair, that is not what I'm hearing from Manitoba families out there. What Manitoba families want is to ensure that they have the tools that they need to keep their families together, and we will continue to work with those families to ensure that that happens.

Mrs. Smith: Well, now we're getting somewhere, and it's nice to hear the minister acknowledge that maybe kids have gone back to their families and they are in receipt of health-care benefits. That's all we're asking from this minister. Why can't she report those numbers as well?

I'll give you another example. My son recently, in the last four months, took care and control of his daughter. His daughter was apprehended, but he is not the sole provider. The kids were apprehended by CFS. So my son was able to get his children back, thankfully, but they're under CFS. So they live with him, he provides for them, takes care of them, but he has had to petition the government to get full custody of his children. And these are his children. They were in the care of their mother.

This government is making it harder for families to actually get their children back. So I just want to let the minister know that, you know, you're saying that you want to make life easier for families, you want to reunify families—there's so many other examples that I can give. I would just ask this minister that—or I would just ask that the government really look at being transparent in numbers. And if there is 2,500 kids that have returned back home and they're in their families' custody, great. We'd love to see that. That's what we want to see. That's our No. 1 goal, I think everybody's No. 1 goal, is to have children at home with their families.

But we also need to be transparent in that, that those kids have gone back home but they're still being supported and they're being supported by this government. And that's all we're asking. There's nothing malicious about this. I'm not asking, you know, to be, you know, mean, this isn't a partisan game. It's all about supporting families and being transparent about these numbers and making sure that the government is transparent.

So I hope that the minister would undertake and maybe let us know a breakdown of, you know, how many kids are in care and how many kids have

returned home and are receiving EIA. That's all we're asking. So, miigwech.

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the member for her questioning. It was more of a comment, I guess.

And certainly I do know that she's very passionate about these issues, as am I. We are mothers and we care very deeply about our children, our own children as well as all of the children in our province and around the world, and we want to ensure that they have the hope and opportunity that they need, want and deserve in life. And that's exactly what we are doing as a government is we are ensuring that they have the tools that they need and that their families have the tools that they need in order to keep those families together.

The member opposite, you know, she can't erase the past. I mean, she referred to these as the glorious days back in the previous NDP government, Mr. Chair. But, you know, that was a time when they doubled the number of kids in care. They were tearing babies out of families at the time.

You know, they had an opportunity, they had 17 years to end birth alerts in the province of Manitoba. And, you know, we have ended—I'm proud to say that we have ended that practice of birth alerts in the province of Manitoba. They had years to do that, more than a decade to do that. They chose not to do it. And we came in and have done the right thing.

* (18:50)

And I think also, Mr. Chair, it's important to note, when we're talking about our child-welfare system, the member opposite said something about, you know, I'm not reporting the numbers accurately, or whatever it is, I'm hiding things. You know, I don't know what hiding is when we're—we've got a document before us today where everything is spelled out in that document. The numbers are there. The number of kids in care is there. We get those numbers from the agencies, from the authorities and that's what is in this document and that's what we're debating today. There's nothing to hide about a report that is tabled in the Manitoba Legislature.

But, Mr. Chair, I think the important thing here is that we're moving in the right track when it comes to our child-welfare system. We're reducing the number of kids in care. We've gotten rid of birth alerts. We're putting together, investing in early intervention and preventive—prevention initiatives like the Community Helpers Initiative, Granny's House, the Mothering Project at Mount Carmel Clinic, and the whole host of

other things that we're investing in as well through our agencies and authorities. And we will continue to work with our community organizations. We'll continue to work with our authorities and our agencies to ensure that we do what's in the best interest of those children and we keep those families together.

Ms. Adams: First, I'd like to thank my colleague, Ms. Smith, in bringing forward and ending birth alerts. I understand that the government at the time didn't support that but came in at the last minute and took credit, so I would like to acknowledge that. Ms. Smith, the MLA for Point Douglas, did bring that forward and has been continuously fighting to end birth alerts.

But now we're going to move on to child care. As an example from my last point, because of the change of definition, the minister's annual report says that there is funded non-profit spaces in Manitoba. Yet, through the Freedom of Information, we specifically specified how many spaces are there actually receiving the operating grant. As the minister can see, there is a funded unprofit and unfunded unprofit. So what I'm asking is why the discrepancy and why the change?

Mrs. Stefanson: I will have to address, there was two parts to the member's question; one was on the child and family services system and birth alerts, and the other is with the—is the increase in the number of child-care spaces that we've created in the province of Manitoba.

So let me address the first one. The member opposite and members opposite, you cannot—they cannot erase history. I know they would love to go back to those glorious days of the previous NDP government when they doubled the number of kids in care, when they issued birth alerts, when they started that program, Mr. Chair. They can't.

I mean, now all of a sudden they're going to try and take credit for that? That is absolutely ridiculous. And, you know, as much—they had 17 years to end that practice back when they were in government. It was not a priority for their government at the time.

Now maybe the members opposite were not members at the time and so they'll try and weasel the way out of it that way, but the fact of the matter is they support a party that's policy was to implement birth alerts in the province of Manitoba.

We, as a party and as a policy, ended that. Those are facts. And I know the members opposite like to pay fast and loose with the facts in our province when

it comes to things like our child-welfare system, Mr. Speaker—or Mr. Chair. But these are the facts.

Now, when it comes to the other question that the member opposite is talking about, we've had an increase in funded spaces. We've had an increase in unfunded spaces. We've had an increase in spaces in child care in the province of Manitoba. I'm not sure what part of this the member opposite doesn't understand, but that's a good thing.

Mr. Chairperson: I would just caution all members that terminology like playing fast and loose with the facts is not as close to parliamentary as we would strive. As honourable members of the committee, it comes close to accusing somebody of lying. So, just a general caution.

I believe Ms. Adams had a—wished to ask a question.

Ms. Adams: I'll ask the minister again: We can see that there is funded non-profit spaces, unfunded non-profit spaces, funded for-profit spaces; and most of the increase in spaces are unfunded.

The answer is, there are three thousand—30,927 spaces. That is a difference of 1,407.

I ask the minister: Why is the minister calling spaces which receive no operating grants as funded spaces? It's—there's no funding for them. The government cannot be taking credit for funding spaces that they're not actually funding.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Chair, regardless if spaces are funded or unfunded, the fact of the matter is, it's the job of the Department of Families and the Minister of Families to ensure that we're providing adequate child care for those that need it.

And so, what we do is, we make an environment that is conducive to increasing the number of spaces in the province of Manitoba. It doesn't matter if they're funded or unfunded. We're creating an environment where Manitobans on their own are opening up their home daycare situations. They're setting up their own facilities that they want, Mr. Chair.

These are—some of these are funded; some of these are not funded, but the fact of the matter, those spaces are there for the families that need it when they need it. And that was the problem back in the previous NDP government is that they doubled the wait-list at the time, when it came to child care in the province of Manitoba. And, once again, we're left with a mess in

the province of Manitoba, where we have to clean up the mess of the previous NDP government.

So we're putting in place programs like the child centre development tax credit. We're putting incentive programs out there to increase the number of child-care spaces in the province of Manitoba. Some of those spaces are funded; some are unfunded. The important thing is that we've got child care there for Manitoba families when they need it.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Smith. My apologies; Ms. Adams.

Ms. Adams: Well, I'm quite troubled that this government is having more—is allowing more for-profit centres. It's quite troubling, as we've seen what happens when for-profit gets involved in child care. We see fees go up and quality and wages go down.

The minister has turned off the public reporting for the number of children waiting for child-care spaces in the summer of 2008. It was two years ago.

Can the minister explain why the number is no longer being released and what she intends to release in the future? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Minister Stefanson.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm just so anxious to answer the question, Mr. Chair.

The fact of the matter is, we've created nearly 2,500 new spaces through our capital programs, and our capital grant programs are creating 795 new spaces this year alone. What we need to do within the system is create more capacity that's there for Manitoba families when they need that child care.

Right now, the member opposite will know that we are in the middle of a worldwide pandemic, that we created—that we've put together a child-care system very quickly to ensure at the beginning of this pandemic that we were providing child care for the essential and critical service staff, the front-line staff in health care, the front-line staff in families and in other areas, our critical-care providers. We needed to ensure that there was child care there for those people who needed it.

* (19:00)

Then we opened it up for everyone else, and what we have right now is we had a match-making system. So the agencies, the child-care centres themselves and the home-based child-care centres as well are on a database where some—where those who are looking

for child care in the province can go to that website and find adequate child care.

We know right now that there is not a wait-list in child care in the province of Manitoba. In fact, there are more than 5,000 vacancies right now in the province of Manitoba. But we know that, eventually, we're going to have to build the capacity within the system to ensure that when Manitobans do get back to work, as we come through this pandemic, that we have the child-care spaces there for those families when they need it.

Now, if we go back to the previous NDP government, where they didn't look at building capacity because they took a very ideological approach to child-care spaces in the province of Manitoba, and we will not do that. We will ensure that we work with our partners out there.

We're working with the Manitoba and Winnipeg chambers. We're working with The Winnipeg Foundation. We're working with child-care centres themselves. We're working with families. We're working with parents who need the access to the child care. And we are going to develop a system that ensures that there is adequate child care there for those families when they need it.

Now, is it going to happen overnight? No. Because we continue to clean up a very significant mess from the previous NDP government. But I will tell you, we will not take an ideological approach. We will take a very practical, common sense approach to ensure that we have adequate child-care spaces for Manitoba families there when they need it.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Smith? Sorry, it's been a long day.

Ms. Adams—my mistake again, my apologies.

Ms. Adams: Well, I'd like to thank the minister for her comments.

It is—I am quite concerned by some of her comments. It doesn't matter if a child-care spot is funded or unfunded? A funded child-care spot means it's more affordable for families. And when the minister is saying that members opposite are taking an ideological approach, I would also say that members opposite are taking an ideological approach and prioritizing for-profit centres. And we know that is coming.

And recently, the minister has begun releasing information about empty spaces available for—in child-care centres, including spaces that are charging

quite high prices of \$40 a day. Providing the numbers—providing a number of these kinds of spaces doesn't really tell us much about most Manitobans can't afford that. That's over \$10,000 per year per child.

Again, how can the minister explain why she's no longer reporting the number of spaces—number of people on the child-care registry?

Mrs. Stefanson: I think I explained that already to the member, but, you know, what we do is we have an online matching system right now that is available to Manitoba families who are in need of child care. They can go to that website and they can go through each—it's actually indicated on the website how many spaces are available in each of those centres.

And so all of those families have the ability to go to that website. And it's like a matching system. If there's a need for child care, we've got it online where they can contact those centres directly and find the child care that they need. So that's the system that's in place right now.

What we do know is that there's over 5,000 vacant spaces right now.

Ms. Adams: I'd like to thank the minister for her answer. However, the problem comes in is, as I've indicated before with the minister and the Department of Families, lumping in everything together including funded and unfunded spaces, home daycare spaces and for-profit centres, it means that it looks like there's a lot of affordable daycare in Manitoba when in actuality there is not.

So will the minister release how many funded child-care spaces are available in the province, and will the minister indicate how many families in Manitoba are waiting for the funded, affordable child-care spaces?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chair, I—you know, with all due respect, the member took a fair amount of time from the committee and tabled a document that—for the committee members, which was a page out of the annual report that has the answer on it to the question that she just asked.

So I would suggest that she goes back to that piece of paper and she can look right on that page and find the answer to her question.

Ms. Adams: And how many families are—on that list are waiting for one of the affordable child-care spots?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, I've already answered that question for the member. We have an online system that matches child care for those who need it and they can find the child care that they need that is within, you know, their affordability.

And so, I'm not sure what the member opposite doesn't understand by that, but that's a fact and those people have access to that—those child-care spaces now.

Ms. Adams: If the minister would take a look at document No. 2 that was sent.

The document says that there is thirty thousand seven hundred—seven—30,927 funded spaces, yet the minister—yet they're saying there is many more spaces than that in the province. And, once again, the 33,000 spaces are the funded spaces, are the affordable spaces.

So how many families are waiting for the affordable spaces? Families that are low-income and families that are struggling aren't going to be paying \$40 a day for daycare.

Mrs. Stefanson: Whether they're unfunded or funded spaces, Mr. Chair, they still charge the same amount to Manitoba families. We have among the lowest child-care rates in all of the country so—you know, so that's the information, I believe, that the member opposite is looking for.

Ms. Adams: The problem is, the minister is talking about past issues that Manitoba families—Manitoba families don't just need child care but they need affordable child care. If they could all do \$10,000 a year for child care, there would be no wait-list, but that's not the reality. People are waiting because there's—they are waiting for affordable child care.

Again, can the minister explain why the number of people on the child-care registry is being kept hidden for the last two years?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chair, when it comes to child care in the province of Manitoba, there's affordability, of which we have among the lowest rates in all of the country, and there's also accessibility.

And the problem that the NDP created when they were back in government is that they didn't provide the accessibility for child care in the province of Manitoba, leaving us with the mess that we have today to clean up.

* (19:10)

And because they took a very ideological approach to this, Mr. Chair, it's unfortunate, but they did not increase the capacity—that mess—so the supply did not meet the demand out there. So they created a significant backlog and wait-list back when they were in government. I can tell her now that we are building on that capacity within the child-care sector. That is a good thing: 2,500 new spaces and growing; 795 this year alone. That's more than the dribs and drabs of 50 spaces here and there over years under the previous NDP government.

We're changing that approach, getting rid of the ideological approach, taking a very practical, common sense approach to ensure that there is access to child care and affordable child care for those that need it within the province of Manitoba. That's the difference between us and her NDP party.

Ms. Adams: So I would like to ask the minister: For the record, is the minister committing today that child care will continue to be affordable and there will not be a fee increase for families in Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, we've heard loud and clear from Manitoba families that because of the ideological approach from the previous NDP government that created a short supply of child-care spaces in the province of Manitoba, they've been unable to access, under the previous government, the child care that they needed. What we are going to commit to is to ensure that we work with families, and that we are going to develop a system that works for what they need.

Right now, we've seen through the COVID-19 times that more Manitoba families need child care at different times than just the cookie-cutter approach under the previous NDP government of 8 to 5 or 8 to 6 every day, but sometimes we need 24-7 child care. You know, right now we need to ensure that we increase the capacity of different kinds of child care that's there for Manitoba families when they need it, and a part of that will be—will absolutely be affordability for those families that need it.

Ms. Adams: So I'd like to—I would just like the minister to commit that she would not change the regulations, so centres and families would not be paying—that she would not—there would not be a fee increase for families; which would all—all it would require is a regulatory change from this minister.

Mrs. Stefanson: I believe I already answered that question previously for the member. But what this does do is it gives me an opportunity to talk once again

about the lack of accessible child care that the NDP created back in their glorious years in—when they were in government.

What I will say is that we've put together a number of programs in order to ensure that once we get out of this pandemic that we have the necessary spots in place for Manitoba families and the kind of child care that they need when they need it.

So we're going to shift away from providing a child-care system that really isn't conducive to creating the 'chind' of child care that Manitoba families need. What we need to do is look at what do Manitoba families need and then create a child-care system for them.

And that's what we're committed to doing, and we're going to continue to work with our stakeholders. Again, not taking an ideological, cookie-cutter approach the way the previous NDP government did, but we're going to very much take a very family and parent-centered approach to ensure that those Manitoba families get the kind of child care that they need, when they need it.

And so, certainly, some of those program that we have invested in—eight point five million in start-up grants administered just by the Winnipeg and Manitoba Chambers of Commerce—will create over 800 new spaces. By the fall of next year, our \$4.7-million child-care centre development tax credit will create 260 new spaces in workplaces and in Winnipeg and Selkirk and Altona. And the tax credit is on target to create up to 682 spaces over five years.

So those are just some of the things that we put in place over the last little while that we're seeing some positive results in terms of creating more capacity within the child-care system for Manitoba families.

But it also gives me a chance, I think, Mr. Chair, to talk a little bit about some of the investments that we've made during—in child care during this pandemic because it has been significant.

And I really want to thank all of those child-care workers who have been working diligently with our children to ensure that those who need to get to work have the access to the child care that they need. And we've been successful with this matchmaking program to allow them to have the kind of child care that they need.

But I know, Madam—or, Mr. Chair, that we've also, we've invested more than *[inaudible]* \$1.6 million of *[inaudible]* items of PPE out for

workers, \$1.4 million from the risk recognition pay program for over 1,000 eligible child-care workers. We've invested nearly \$90 million in provincial operating grants during this pandemic.

We've invested over \$15 million through a one-year extension of the bilateral agreement with the federal government. We've invested \$2.4 million in the COVID-19 Response Grant to help child-care centres with COVID-related *[inaudible]* and costs.

We've invested \$8.5 million in start-up grants administered by Winnipeg and Manitoba Chambers of Commerce to create over 800 spaces, which I alluded to earlier. We've invested \$11.5 million for a new child-care sustainability trust fund. And \$4.7 million for a new child-care centre development tax credit which I talked about earlier, creating up to 682 spaces in workplaces throughout the province of Manitoba.

So we will continue to work with Manitoba families to ensure that we create a child-care system that is there and available to them for when they need it.

Ms. Adams: Well, Manitoba families need affordable, quality, accessible child care. They also need to know that their—that early childhood educators are going to be protected while they are caring for their kids. This government sent expired masks to centres.

So I'd ask the minister, has she done any inquiries on how the expired masks made it into our child-care centres?

Mrs. Stefanson: I know that we've been in touch with those centres who did receive those masks. We've apologized for that. We've sent them new masks and that situation is behind us.

* (19:20)

But I think what's more important here is that we're ensuring that we are sending out the PPE to those who work in the system to ensure their safety within those centres, and we're working very closely. As a matter of fact, we've had more than six—I think it's six webinars with the child-care sector alone, with Dr. Roussin, to answer the many questions that they've had and those have been very, very productive discussions with them. And not only have we had those webinars with Dr. Roussin in that—in the child-care sector, but we've also offered it in CFS for the workers out there, as well as Community Living disABILITY Services as well.

You know, those are our front-line workers. They have many questions about PPE, about other things, about ensuring the safety of children and the clients out there in the community and those were very, very productive webinars that he was—you know, we were very grateful to have him as a part of that, to be able to answer those very important questions.

I also took it upon myself to reach out to one of the leading dermatologists in the province of Manitoba and had a webinar with her where she explained that—you know, some of the rashes that you can get from masks that has nothing to do with expired masks or anything like that, but just masks in general. It's—you know, we can suffer from—whether it's mask acne, I think, is what they call it—but you can get rashes from these.

And so, I think it was very productive in our child-care sector for her to talk to folks within—you know, those that are working with the children, having to wear these masks and are getting some of these rashes; how they can wear those masks in an appropriate way to help reduce, you know, the instances of getting those rashes or the mask acne, which can cause—you know, it can be frustrating for people.

And I think—you know, frankly I think she answered a lot of their concerns and they realized that, you know, this is not just them, it's everyone; everyone who's having to wear masks out there right now. You know, we need to ensure that people are wearing them properly and so, we did set that up with her in a webinar with one of the leading dermatologists and just specifically in the child-care sector and I think that was very informative for them.

So, I think that there's lots of things that we are doing. These are very, very difficult, unprecedented times right now where front-line workers really need that opportunity to speak to our experts in the health-care field, to speak to—you know, to have them answer their questions directly.

And I just want to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Brent Roussin and Dr. Marni Wiseman who's the dermatologist, and really, the department staff who've been absolutely incredible when it comes to the child-care sector, when it comes to Child and Family Services, those working with, you know, Community Living disABILITY Services, with our disabilities folks in the community. They are just doing incredible work.

And I know we recently announced the caregiver support program for those who are working within the CFS and CLDS area. We also announced \$10 million for the pandemic support program, \$6 million into CLDS, \$3 million for child care as well as—and a million in the CFS sector as well.

So, these are some of the investments that we're making. We recognize this is a very difficult time, especially for our front-line workers and I just want to take this opportunity to thank all of them for the incredible work that they are doing to keeping our clients safe in our province.

Ms. Adams: Well, I'm very happy to hear that the minister provided all of those webinars for people that receive the masks and did some education on masks.

But it doesn't answer my other question, which was: is the minister going to do an investigation, and make that investigation public, on how expired masks made it into our child-care centres, our personal-care homes or in the Child and Family Services and any department that she oversees?

Is the minister going to do an investigation on how that happened and will that investigation be made public?

Mrs. Stefanson: I think the important thing to remember here is that we are investing in—it's more than \$400 million in PPE that we are providing to front-line service staff who are doing yeomen's work out there and helping the most vulnerable people in our communities and, you know; so we are making those investments.

You know, this is a very fast-moving pandemic. Things are changing on a day-to-day basis, sometimes an hour-by-hour basis. And, you know, mistakes are made; we are human. You know, that does happen, mistakes are made, and when this mistake was made, I apologized, we sent out the masks—new masks to them, and so they were quite grateful for that.

And, so, I mean if the member opposite wants to, you know, belabour this, you know, it was a mistake. We apologize. We've rectified the mistake to ensure that they got the appropriate masks. End of story.

Ms. Adams: Thank you. I'm very glad to hear that the minister did apologize for the error. I am disappointed that the minister isn't going to be doing an investigation on how that happened. I do think that's important, but we're going to move on.

The minister is also in the midst of implementing significant changes to our child care in this province.

I've asked the minister in the House, and I will ask her here: will she release the KPMG child-care review and will she let us see the 'implementing' legislation that has already been introduced in the House?

Mrs. Stefanson: And again, the—I've, you know, answered this question for the member before. The KPMG report is merely one tool that we're looking at out there when it comes to the reform that we're going to be taking within the child-care sector; a reform that we're taking because of, you know, a mess that was created by the previous NDP government, I will add.

So, we will take a different approach. We won't take an ideological approach; we will be working with parents to ensure that they get the kind of child care that they need when they need it. I think that's the important thing here, and we will be working with community stakeholders as well, the Manitoba Child Care Association, others out there to ensure that we develop a system that is conducive to building the capacity of the kind of child care that Manitoba families need in order to get them back to work and get them the kind of child care—the choice that they need within a child-care system, to ensure they get the kind of child care that they need as they move back into the workforce.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 7:30, as previously agreed, we will review how long the committee wishes to sit. How long does the committee wish to sit for?

Mrs. Smith: We are about halfway through our questions. We did agree—or, want to agree—'til 8, but we're only halfway through, so, I would say another hour? 8:30?

* (19:30)

Mr. Chairperson: It has been proposed by Mrs. Smith that the committee sit until 8:30.

Is that the will of the committee, to sit until 8:30?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no. Are there any other suggestions?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I just wanted to say that I have about 15 minutes of questions when the NDP are finished.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other suggestions as to how late the committee wishes to sit?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Mr. Chair, I have a motion.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Morley-Lecomte, have you emailed the motion to the moderator?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: No. I will.

Have you received it?

Mr. Chairperson: Have you sent it to the moderator?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Moderator 255?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Just a moment, please.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte, the moderator has sent you an email to ensure that you have the correct email address. Could you please respond by emailing the motion to the email—in response to the email sent to you by the moderator?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Okay.

Yes, I have responded.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Is your motion a motion to rise or is it something different?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: My motion is: I move that committee rise.

Mrs. Smith: I object to the committee rising.

This is going to be our last time meeting as a committee. We have three years of—

Mr. Chairperson: Mrs. Smith, we—a motion has been submitted and the rules obligate us to put the motion first. I'm just being consulted by clerks and will let that process play out as per the rules, before any other actions can be taken.

It has been moved by Ms. Morley-Lecomte that the committee rise. The question before the committee is that the committee rise.

Shall the motion pass?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

The motion is defeated.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Recorded vote.

An Honourable Member: I vote no.

When do I vote?

Mr. Chairperson: We're just sorting that out. Just a moment, please.

An Honourable Member: Okay. I just usually go first because I'm Adams.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to do a voice vote first before a recorded vote?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: We can. But I would like a recorded vote as well.

Mr. Chairperson: Then we'll just prepare for a recorded vote, one moment please.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Cox, Morley-Lecomte, Stefanson.

Nays

Adams, Smith (Point Douglas).

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Katerina Tefft): Yeas 3, Noes 2.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is accordingly passed.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 7:39 p.m.

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