

Ottawa

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Constituency

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Leah Gazan

Member of Parliament for Winnipeg Centre
Député de Winnipeg Centre

October 18, 2023

Dear Senator Omidvar,

I am writing to you regarding Bill C-35, the Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act. While I fully support this legislation and believe the Senate should not make major alterations to it, I am requesting two small amendments that will help make this piece of legislation even better.

The first is adding a definition of Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) to the “definitions” section of the bill. The definition would specify that “ELCC” for the purposes of this Act means ELCC that is licensed by a provincial or territorial government, and/or ELCC operated under the jurisdiction of an Indigenous governing body.

This is a crucial clarification because it aligns the legislation with the bilateral agreements, which clearly lay out that the type of ELCC being funded by the federal government are licensed providers. It also recognizes that Indigenous communities have their own unique realities and respects the agreements signed between Indigenous governing bodies and the federal government.

It is also critical to ensure that the type of child care system we are building is one that provides children with the best possible start in life. High quality, licensed child care means that children are being cared for by well-trained staff in settings that support their learning and development. That’s why it’s so important for this legislation to make clear that when ELCC is being referred to in the Act, it’s talking about licensed child care and/or child care provided under the auspices of Indigenous governing bodies.

Secondly, I am asking the committee to consider strengthening one specific element of the reporting provisions in the bill. Currently, clause 14.1 of Bill C-35 states only that the Minister “may” share information in their possession that they are authorized to share upon request of the council.

I believe that a higher standard of disclosure by changing the word “may” to “must” or “shall” will help the council better fulfill its role as an advisory body. This is also a change requested by experts and advocates in the child care sector. I understand that some information, including data pertaining to

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Indigenous children, is sensitive. However, the language of “if it is within the authority of the Minister to share the information” should effectively address that concern.

I am proud of the work that we achieved at HUMA to strengthen Bill C-35. It is a good piece of legislation that can be further improved with these two adjustments that I have outlined. Thank you to the committee for their consideration of this letter and I hope that these proposed changes can be incorporated into the final version of the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leah Gazan'.

Leah Gazan, MP
Winnipeg Centre