

Parent Voices: Making the Case for Child Care Spring, 2002

Across Canada—in cities, towns and rural areas—parents are saying they want to speak out about child care. Now, they'll have a way to build a strong collective voice through a new, two-year initiative sponsored by the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada.

“The *Parent Voices* project grew out of the last set of CCAAC cross-country consultations,” said project consultant Dianne Goldberg. “Parents said repeatedly that they wanted to know more about and advocate for child care locally, regionally and federally.”

Parent Voices is about building a parent network using a community development approach. It's also about making stronger links between parents and the CCAAC and other interested organizations.

“At this stage, it's hard to predict what *Parent Voices* will look like, because our approach will be to listen to families and organizations and learn from them as to how they want it to be,” said Goldberg. “We're not aiming to build new organizations. The way it evolves could look different from region to region. It's going to be very exciting!”

Diversity key

A key priority is to include diverse parent voices: different economic, language and cultural groups, parents of children with special needs and voices reflecting the broad range of child care needs.

“There are issues that affect different families in different ways,” said Goldberg. “For example, there's the high cost of quality child care, lack of access and flexibility in child care options, and the difficulty finding child care that accommodates special needs and is linguistically and culturally sensitive.”

Parent Voices will work with parents to develop tools and resources, such as information on child care issues and support for building advocacy skills. It will also provide parents with opportunities to share experiences and develop strategies—whether it's coming together to meet face-to-face, or through the Web.

A steering committee of representatives from the CCAAC board will work with parents to develop *Parent Voices*.

“Parents need a national voice which will make it easy for them to harness their own political power and bring about change.”

Necole Anderson, Founding Member, Parents for Child Care, Vancouver

“The prospect of having the sustained participation of parents in public education strategies is one that we fully support.”

**Lynn Smith, Coordinator, CUPW Family Resource Centre, St. John’s
Newfoundland**

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Parent Voices: Making the Case for Child Care, is funded by the Social Development Partnership Program, Human Resources Development Canada.