

Moving Forward Together Project

A Child Care Advocacy of Canada Initiative

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As Chair of the Moving Forward Together Steering Committee, it has been my privilege and pleasure to work with all of you. I trust that this report and the actions flowing from it reflect the collective wisdom that you shared with us.

Rita Chudnovsky

Chair - Moving Forward Together Steering Committee

Introduction

Over the past years, members of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC) along with other interested individuals and organizations from across Canada have come together to share their concerns about the fragile state of child care and the child care advocacy movement and to consider how to address these concerns.

Given the lack of action on a child care agenda at the federal level, the serious impact on child care funding in many provinces as a result of reduced federal transfer payments and the challenges posed by the new 'social union'- many of us recognize an urgent need to find new ways to position our child care message and new ways to work together more effectively.

As part of this on-going process, 30 individuals representing 26 organizations met in March 1998 in Ottawa to consider the following question:

How does the child care movement position child care in the current context and how do we - supporters of a comprehensive child care program in Canada - organize ourselves as partners to achieve this goal?

One of the key directions agreed to at this meeting was the need for the child care advocacy movement to become more **inclusive**. Our work needs to better reflect the diversity of communities, families, women, children and child care services. Our organization needs to more effectively bring **together three important constituencies** - provincial and territorial child care organizations, like minded social justice organizations and representatives of diverse and minority communities. We began to call this direction for building links - the '**Three Circle Approach**'. Based on these discussions, CCAAC launched the Moving Forward Together Project.

The Three Circle Approach and its Guiding Principles

The purpose of the Three Circle Approach is to facilitate a process by which the child care advocacy movement is able to become more inclusive and diversified. This means reaching out to women, young people, aboriginal people, rural communities, women and men of colour, the disability/community living movement, the anti-poverty movement, francophones and persons of different ethnic minorities, languages, religions and sexual orientation - amongst others.

It means building bridges with social justice organizations and strengthening ties with such partners as labour organizations, national and regional advocacy groups, women's groups and anti-poverty groups.

It also means considering appropriate and relevant ways for different groups and/or individuals to become actively involved in the child care advocacy movement. For example, involvement may mean a group or individual membership or it may mean some kind of cooperative alliance or partnership.

We hope that this approach will help our colleagues and partners in a renewed movement more appropriately:

- reflect the diversity of our communities
- become more inclusive in process, practice and policy
- strengthen our mutual interest in building comprehensive child care services for all of Canada's children

The following **Guiding Principles** were used to frame the Three Circle Approach and our considerations:

- Accessibility** - how we build an open organization that welcomes participation, and a movement that speaks to our multiple needs and concerns.

Equity - how we ensure a meaningful voice for participating members within the organization and in its public messages

Accountability - how we practice effective and transparent communication (internal and external), decision making and political action.

The above approach challenged us to develop new ways of building relationships, partnerships and alliances and to find innovative ways to communicate.

Project Activities

The Moving Forward Together project developed with the support of a Steering Committee comprised of two members of the CCAAC Board of Directors and two members of the broader child care community – one from the labour movement and one representing the rural child care sector. A number of activities were organized spanning September 1998 through to March 1999. They included:

- The development of a **discussion paper** outlining the **Moving Forward Together** initiative including the Three Circle Approach and its guiding principles, some key questions to direct to our various constituencies and some organizational options to consider. This paper was used to facilitate the consultation process.
- A **special consultation meeting**, in November 1998, with CCAAC members, partners and colleagues was organized in conjunction with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Conference and the Symposium on “Advancing Early Childhood Care And Education In Canada, The United States, Britain, and Australia: Exchanging Knowledge And Strategies Across Borders”.
- A series of **focus groups** and **individual interviews** were organized across Canada with the help of the Steering Committee and the CCAAC Board of Directors. Discussions took place with representatives of social justice groups, child care organizations and individuals, labour, government and many others. In January 1999, a western itinerary was organized including Vancouver, Calgary, Saskatoon, Langruth and its hub community and Winnipeg. In February 1999, the eastern tour included Halifax, St. Johns, Ottawa and Toronto. Funds and time limited a more extensive consultation process.

- A CCAAC **Board of Directors consultation** in February 1999, also took place to gather input for this process from across the country and to provide an opportunity for the Board to consider the emerging implications of the project. The outcome of this meeting began to shape the goals and plans for the next year of the Association's work. In June 1999, this report was written summarizing the project's work to date and outlining some suggested plans for the next two years.

The work has begun and now must continue. Later in this report, we outline our suggestions for continuing the consultation process.

What We Learned

Whether the consultation involved focus groups or interviews, whether the meetings were in the east or the west, **several themes** emerged time and again. The themes can be grouped in three components. They are comments regarding our message, our inclusive approach and our role as a federal organization.

Regarding our message:

1. There is an urgent need to ensure that the CCAAC **definition of child care is inclusive** and supportive of a “range of early childhood services” including full and part-time care; care from birth to twelve years; group, family, pre-school (nursery school) and in home care; rural care; care for children with extra support needs, culturally appropriate care, etc. Many want to contribute to a more explicit contemporary terminology. Without this clear definition and an extensive strategy to share it widely, support for CCAAC will be limited.

“The CCAAC platform hasn’t changed in years – the child care community has!”

2. There is a need to place **child care within a broader family policy**. Child care should be seen as a service that complements, but does not compete with, policies and services that support families including those with a parent at home. Particular attention needs to be given to complementary parental and maternity leave policies and family work policies that respond to the needs of working parents.

“Child care needs to be part of a comprehensive set of family policies”

3. There is a need to develop the CCAAC vision for child care to reflect an understanding of the role of child care within the **National Children's Agenda**.

"How do we encourage Canadians to share responsibility for caring for our children?"

"How do we broaden the circle of those who care about child care?"

4. Increasingly communities are focusing on child care as **an important service for all children** as well as support to parents at home, at work or at school; as an important component of women's equality; as a part of an anti-poverty strategy and always as a service which supports and strengthens families.

"Child care services must meet the needs of all children; then they must meet the needs of families".

5. There is a need to **develop a simple message** and share it widely and use it often.

"We need to say what we mean and say it well".

"We seem to have lost the ability to tell our story simply".

Regarding an inclusive approach:

1. There is an urgent need to foster, support and enable **the voice of parents** in the child care advocacy movement. The facilitation of a pan-Canadian parent voice would add a needed dimension to the child care

advocacy movement while contributing to broader public awareness through parents as our natural partners.

“As a parent – I need a national advocacy organization”.

2. There is a need to ensure **a meaningful voice for our allies and partners** in the development of policy while recognizing that they may not have the resources or the interest to participate in the day-to-day management and governance of CCAAC.

“When we are organized and we know what we need, support will be there for CCAAC in the form of voice, funds and action.”

3. While there may not be formal child care advocacy organizations in every province and territory, there are **networks of advocates** in provinces and regions across the country that can cooperate at a Canada wide level.

“We need different kinds of alliances now”!

4. **Leaders and advocates** want to come together to better understand the current federal and provincial context; learn from each other regarding successful advocacy strategies and experiences and in this way, mitigate their sense of isolation and discouragement in challenging times with little progress in sight.

“We don’t hear enough about positive child care experiences”.

“Please help us figure out how to encourage the federal and provincial governments to work together”.

5. There is a need for CCAAC to **balance the organizing and networking** in Ottawa with time working with provincial or regional activists and organizations. This is often called “putting the show on the road”. This also was identified as one of the ways to support a new generation of advocates coming from an inclusive range of groups and communities.

“CCAAC should visit provinces with concrete discussion plans leading to action – this will build the profile of the Association and strengthen the movement simultaneously”.

“Provincial initiatives plus federal support add up to a “win-win” situation”.

“Now we must focus on the national and provincial scenes at the same time”

Regarding our Role:

1. CCAAC’s primary role is to monitor, analyse and advance child care policy at both federal and provincial/territorial levels.
2. CCAAC’s role is to communicate information about new developments and an analysis of these developments in a timely, accessible way in order to facilitate discussion. CCAAC’s communication strategy needs to tailor information for specific audiences.
3. CCAAC’s role is to facilitate the renewal of the child care advocacy movement through a community development process. This approach will ensure that CCAAC’s policy is responsive to community needs and will strengthen the local and regional capacity to act. There was a lot of support for the outreach approach used during the Moving Forward

Together Project. Our presence in communities was a catalyst for bringing people together and for identifying some of the informal networks that already exist.

4. CCAAC has a leadership role to play in sharing information about effective advocacy tactics being used across the country and for initiating coordinated action Canada wide.
5. CCAAC has a leadership role to play in bringing together child care activists from across the country, many of whom are urgently looking for opportunities to restore their energy and renew their commitment.

Renewing the Child Care Advocacy Movement: Renewing the Child Care Advocacy Association

The things we have heard and learned through the Moving Forward Together Project have important implications for the messages, processes and structures of child care advocacy in Canada. While the entire child care advocacy community shares responsibility for building a more inclusive and representative movement, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC) has a particular responsibility for providing leadership to a renewal process that respects and integrates the lessons learned from our partners across the country.

This work has already begun in two important ways. CCAAC's application to Status of Women Canada for the 1999/00 year gives priority to projects that will:

- strengthen relationships with regional, provincial and territorial advocacy organizations and networks
- explore and learn from Quebec's family policy and child care initiative while strengthening relationships with colleagues in Quebec
- coordinate the development and advancement of consistent policy proposals at the federal, provincial and territorial levels
- develop more responsive communication strategies and mechanisms that provide timely, usable information that is tailored to the needs of members, partners and the public

Further, the process for recruiting members to the CCAAC Board of Directors in 1999 encouraged linkages between CCAAC Board members and existing organizations and networks that are engaged in child care advocacy. As a result, connections between Board members and the formal and informal constituencies in their communities have been strengthened. This will facilitate more inclusive

and representative policy at the pan-Canadian level and will provide a broader base for coordinated mobilization around advocacy initiatives across the country.

These developments are the first steps in renewing the child care advocacy movement in ways that respond to the new social policy development context in Canada as reflected in the new Social Union Framework and initiatives such as the National Children’s Agenda. But, the work is far from complete. The results of the first phase of the Moving Forward Together Project indicate that there is a need to support the development of on-going processes and structures that will strengthen the movement’s capacity to develop and advance inclusive policy and coordinated advocacy over the coming years.

Therefore, The Moving Forward Together Project recommends an additional two year implementation process for renewing the policy development process and advocacy projects and campaigns of the CCAAC.

1. An Inclusive Council of Child Care Advocates

It is recommended that, over a two year period, the CCAAC support the development of a Council of Child Care Advocates.

This Council would be established within the framework of the principles flowing from the ‘Three Circle Approach’ (as outlined in this Report) and would be the process through which regional and sectoral representatives work together to share the perspectives of their constituencies on policy issues and advocacy strategies. In general, the roles and responsibilities of the Council would be to:

analyze and develop advocacy policy

establish advocacy initiatives, strategies and projects
determine advocacy priorities based on resources available

While specific Terms of Reference need to be developed, the envisioned Council would include approximately 20-25 representatives who would bring perspectives and voice from the child care community and our partners in the social justice movement. Membership on the Council would be built through a number of avenues, including:

13 provincial and territorial representatives, who will come from and be linked to organizations and networks in provinces and territories, wherever possible. The CCAAC's upcoming project in Quebec will allow us to strengthen relationships with colleagues in Quebec and will form the basis for supporting appropriate and respectful participation from Quebec. These representatives will bring perspectives from the full range of early childhood services including full and part-time care; care from birth - 12 years of age; group, family and in-home based care; rural care; care for children with extra support needs; culturally appropriate care; etc.

7 - 10 sectoral representatives bringing perspectives and voice from:

- families and parents
- the children and youth advocacy movement
- the labour movement
- the women's movement
- Aboriginal Peoples
- the anti-poverty movement
- the disability movement
- the immigrant and visible minority community

and possible representation from other sectoral/policy related areas.

It is suggested that the exact composition of the Council allow for flexibility and regular adjustments to ensure balance within a workable group size. For

example, if the composition of the Council does not result in sufficient voice for specific constituencies in a given term, this voice would be invited to the table.

The envisioned Council would meet two times a year. Without question, the creation of the Council has resource implications. On the one hand, the Council will include organizations and sectors that may well be in a position to offer resources. On the other hand, there will be certain cost demands. Given limited organizational resources, it is suggested that 'sectoral' representation and voice be sought through national organizations and networks that are located in the Ottawa Region and/or can support the participation of their representatives.

2. An Effective and Efficient Board of Directors

After the Council is in place and its terms of reference have been carefully considered and determined, it is recommended that CCAAC undertake to move to a Board of Directors composed of five to seven (5 - 7) members.

Within the policy direction and advocacy priorities established by the Council, the roles and responsibilities of the Board would be to manage the financial, administrative, and operational affairs of a non-profit membership-based association. We believe that a Board of 5 - 7 members will be large enough to fulfill these responsibilities while small enough to be administratively effective and cost efficient. A renewed Board, with a tighter focus, would allow more resources to be devoted to the advocacy work of the Association while enhancing timely communication and decision-making.

We recommend that the Board of Directors be elected from the Council membership.

This would enhance the overall capacity of the organization by allowing for clear accountability, strong communication linkages and effective use of limited resources while maintaining a broadly representative Board.

The relationship between the Board, the Council and the membership at large will need to be clearly articulated and regularly reviewed.

An Incremental Implementation Plan

Following the “Open Space Meeting” held in March, 1998, the CCAAC made a commitment to become a more inclusive, accountable, broadly based association. We envisioned a 3 year renewal process beginning in the 1998/99 year. This report outlines the results of the first year of this process and lays the foundation for activities over the next two years.

Year One – July 1998 – June 1999

Based on challenges identified in 1997, during the first year of our renewal process, the CCAAC officially launched the Moving Forward Together Project. The work focused on consultation with child care advocates and social justice partners in many parts of the country. The results of this consultation process have are already having an impact on both CCAAC’s ‘messages’ and ‘processes’ as discussed above. Year One ended with the submission of this report to the CCAAC Board of Directors.

Year Two – July 1999 - June 2000

In this year, it is recommended that the CCAAC focus on implementing the more inclusive policy development processes suggested above. Based on final approval of the application to Status of Women and available resources, it is recommended that CCAAC:

strengthen relationships with provincial and regional child care advocacy organizations and networks through regular communication and coordinated action

continue to develop regional connections through a consultation process in the Yukon, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Edmonton and Alberta.

establish closer connections with colleagues in Quebec through a project to explore and learn about Quebec's family policy and child care initiative

undertake further consultation with national organizations that represent the sectors we would like to see included in the Council of Child Care Advocates to discuss their participation in this process and extend our consultation with the aboriginal community, the disability/community living movement and with immigrant and visible minority women.

establish a Task Force to articulate the relationship between the proposed Council, Board and membership at large. The role of the Task Force will be to:

- oversee and assess the results of the continuing consultation
- based on the consultation process and the external context, make adjustments to this implementation plan as required
- invite potential members of the proposed Council to the CCAAC Winter 2000 Board meeting to begin the process of establishing the Council and its Terms of Reference
- consider CCAAC's membership structure and fee schedule

- In June 2000, CCAAC AGM, recommend any resulting changes required to CCAAC's Constitution and By-laws and operations in order to implement the suggested changes

Year 3 – July 2000 – June 2001

At the June 2000 AGM, CCAAC should finalize the results of the work completed in Year 2. In addition to projects and initiatives that build on the work of Year 2, the work during Year 3 will include:

- establishing and formalizing the proposed Council of Child Care Advocates
- establishing the proposed smaller managing Board of Directors

Conclusion

The Moving Forward Together Project has evolved during a period of significant internal challenges and external change. In spite of these circumstances, the project has successfully begun a renewal process that is already bearing fruit.

At the Association level, the Project and its results have helped increase the profile of CCAAC across the country and has strengthened and extended our connections with advocates and partners. At the movement level, the project has helped us to work together more effectively in light of the changing social policy context in Canada.

After many years during which 'child care' has been marginalized at federal and provincial levels, there are now opportunities for putting it back on the 'front burner'. However, effective advocacy for child care must go hand in hand with a continuing commitment to work in inclusive ways that respect and reflect the rich diversity of communities, regions and sectors across the country. The CCAAC and the broader child care advocacy movement will have to harness its resources to do both over the coming years.

The Moving Forward Together Steering Committee recognizes that change processes need to be flexible and respond to new lessons as they emerge. As a result, we have tried to strike a balance between specific recommendations that allow the CCAAC to 'get on with it' and more open-ended recommendations that will allow for deeper consultation and outreach. In this way we hope that both those who are impatient with the length of the change process and those that feel they are being included for the first time will feel 'heard' and validated.

We want to thank all of groups and individuals across the country who supported and contributed to the Project. Your participation is the real 'success' of the

Project. We trust that we have reflected your ideas, views and concerns honestly and accurately and that this project represents the beginning, not the end, of a shared renewal process. The children and families of Canada deserve nothing less!