

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Canada Fails on Child Care – UNICEF:
Advocacy Group Calls on Federal Government to Acknowledge Failure
and Plan for Improvement***

Yet again, Canada ranks last on the international stage for its failure to act on the evidence showing that quality, universal child care services provide social and economic benefits that far outweigh the costs. Canada failed on 9 out of 10 key indicators, according to a landmark report card on 25 rich countries issued today by UNICEF.

Two essential steps are required in order to solve Canada's child care crisis, and both require the federal government to take a leadership role.

First, the federal government must admit that the problem exists. Therefore, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC) calls on the current federal government to acknowledge that its laissez-faire approach to child care has failed.

"As the UNICEF report makes clear, tax credits to business and small, no-strings-attached payments to provinces and parents have not improved access to quality, affordable child care services," states Jody Dallaire of New Brunswick, CCAAC Chairperson. "Canada has no vision for child care, and outside of Quebec, minimal public funding. It's no surprise that we still find ourselves, as we were with the OECD *Starting Strong* reports, at the bottom of the child care barrel internationally."

Only 17% of Canada's children have access to a regulated child care space. Although Canadian parents pay among the highest child care fees in the world, the trained early childhood educators working with our children earn among the lowest wages in the country.

Second, the federal government must work with Opposition parties and provinces and territories to develop and implement a child care plan for Canada.

"No other country with Canada's financial resources has done so little to support children, women and families" according to Susan Harney of BC and CCAAC Vice-Chairperson. "As federal, provincial and territorial governments consider ways to stimulate the economy, child care should be at the top of their priority list."

Multiple Canadian and US studies show that quality, universal child care promotes local economic development. Child care services will help families weather the current economic storm, whether they are patching together part-time and on-call jobs, maintaining their availability for work as a condition of EI, or participating in skills training. And stable, consistent, high quality early learning and care experiences support children's healthy development, which is particularly important during these stressful times.

"Over the next six weeks we will see whether this minority federal government is prepared to acknowledge and learn from its mistakes and listen to the majority of Canadians who support public investment in child care services," concludes Dallaire. "This will be a true test of the current federal government's leadership and commitment to collaboration."