



***Child care money good first step; accountability needed /
L'argent consacré aux services de garde est un premier pas dans
la bonne direction; il faut des mécanismes de reddition de
comptes.***

CCAAC / ACPSGE Ottawa 23 Feb 05

Ottawa made a solid downpayment on child care in the federal budget today, acting on its long-awaited \$5-billion promise.

“It’s a strong start, but we are concerned about the first-year trust,” said Monica Lysack, executive director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. “It takes away the ability of the federal government to ensure the provinces and territories meet the principles of quality, universality, accessibility and developmental programming. The good news is that the trust is limited to one year and the government seems to be acknowledging the long-term problems of using this mechanism.”

Lysack said the association wants to be involved in developing the accountability package that will come after the first year.

She said advocates across Canada will continue to closely monitor provincial and territorial child care spending. They will also lobby for future federal legislation that requires the provinces and territories to submit plans showing how they will produce quality, universal child care services.

“Funding without strong accountability won’t transform a substandard service into a good system,” Lysack said. “Over \$1-billion federal dollars intended for child care have gone to the provinces and territories without strong accountability requirements through the Early Childhood Development initiative and the Multilateral Framework Agreement, yet the government would be hard-pressed to show the difference the money has made. The federal government must report to Parliament on child care spending.”

The association wants the new child care money to expand non-profit services. This will help assure better quality, stop big-box commercial child care from setting up shop in Canada, and avoid added monitoring costs to make sure child care chains comply with standards.

Lysack said advocates will also press the government to make a commitment to more money beyond five years. The absence of a firm funding guarantee helped scuttle the anticipated child care agreement earlier this month. “The provinces and territories need to be able to move with confidence to create quality services to meet rising future demand.”

The association represents more than 140,000 child care advocates: parents, caregivers, researchers, union members, women’s groups, students and others. It expects a solid

multilateral deal to come out of the next federal/provincial/territorial child care meeting. If some provinces or territories stonewall, the government should seek bilateral agreements with provinces and territories that are ready to go.

Child care is a critical component of family supports whose time has finally come, Lysack said. Canada has spent over \$7 billion on the Child Tax Benefit, and has expanded its parental leave. While there's more to be done in these areas, parents desperately need action on child care.

There are only 315,000 regulated child care spaces for Canada's 2.1 million children under six years of age.

"Canada's families need good child care they can count on and afford. They've waited for decades for governments to solve the child care crisis. They can't wait any longer."