

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

BULLETIN

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SPRING 2003

Support for publicly funded child care overwhelming

What does the public want for child care? According to a recent national poll, 90% of Canadians think we should have a nationally coordinated child care plan that gives all children access to quality child care. Furthermore, 86% agree that "there can be a publicly funded child care system that makes quality child care available to all Canadian children."

The poll was sponsored by the Canadian Child Care Federation and the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. It asked about public preferences in child care – from the perceived quality and benefits of child care, to training for child care providers, and affordability and funding of services.

"We are very pleased to see that the poll reflects such overwhelming support for the development of a quality child care system," said CCAAC Executive Director Maryann Bird. "This poll shows that the public is way ahead of current government child care policy in Canada. In fact, 90% of Canadians say they think that government could be doing more to ensure access to quality child care for all Canadian children."

"We want to get this information out and encourage federal, and provincial and territorial governments to take concrete action to meet the needs of young children and their families. It's time to trade in those 1950s child care models for a system that works for 2003 children and families."

Among the other findings of the poll:

- 90% of Canadians say it is important to make quality child care **affordable** for everyone
- 89% say it is important to make quality child care **available** to everyone
- 88% say it is important that child care be **inclusive** of children with special needs

- 73% believe the **benefits** of providing access to quality child care for all Canadian children outweigh the **costs**
- 88% support **increasing wages** of child care providers

An important service

The poll also shows that Canadians believe quality child care is important to a child's development. Eighty-nine per cent of those polled say that regardless of family background, poor quality child care hurts a child's development. The results also point to a shift in how people perceive child care itself. Two-thirds of the public view it as a developmental service. Only 17% view it as "babysitting."

Child care is regarded as essential to the well-being of families, communities, employers and the broader society:

- 89% agree that "quality child care is essential to the prosperity of Canada"
- 94% of Canadians believe child care is important to allowing parental participation in the paid workforce
- 90% see it as important to assisting in a child's education
- 78% see it as important to developing stronger community ties
- 68% see it as an important service to employers

The poll was conducted by Millward Brown Goldfarb and administered to a random national-proportionate sample of 1,200 people between November 27, 2002 and December 12, 2002. The results of such a sample are accurate to within +/- 2.9%, 19 out of 20 times.

The full poll results and backgrounders will be made available on the CCAAC web site: www.childcareadvocacy.ca.

A pan-Canadian child care strategy: it's a start

The good news: Canada has taken an historic and positive first step towards a pan-Canadian child care plan. The bad news: we're still a long way off.

But let's look at the positives first:

- The February 18 federal budget included a specific allocation for child care.
- In March, the federal government got agreement from the provincial and territorial governments to invest this money in regulated early learning and child care programs for children under six.

These are significant – if long overdue – achievements, and an “acknowledgement of the federal government’s role in the development of a much-needed pan-Canadian child care strategy,” said CCAAC Chair Christine McLean.

But McLean said the \$900 million allocated for child care in the budget over five years falls far short of what is needed. It would take **at least \$1 billion** each year to begin to build the quality, affordable, regulated child care system that children and families need. In addition, the intergovernmental agreement still gives the provinces a lot of “wiggle room.”

The CCAAC believes the federal government needs to ensure that the accountability mechanism in the agreement will be used. Federal funding for child care must go directly into regulated child care services and not end up somewhere else. There is a need to develop targets and timelines for using the new money to create new high quality, regulated spaces; enhance the quality of existing regulated child care programs; and make child care more affordable. Such targets and timelines are not in the current agreement.

As well, the provincial/territorial governments should use the federal dollars in addition to – not instead of – the dollars they have been spending in their child care budgets. CCAAC also expects a proportionate amount of the Early Childhood Development Initiative funds will be spent to establish child care as the cornerstone of the agreement.

Act now to support child care

Contact these federal ministers and tell them they've taken a good first step, but child care needs the money up front and right away:

The Honourable Jane Stewart
Minister of Human Resources Development

House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Phone: (613) 992-3118
Fax: (613) 992-6382
E-mail: Stewart.J@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable John Manley
Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister

House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Phone: (613) 992-3269
Fax: (613) 995-1534
E-mail: Manley.J@parl.gc.ca

Watch for your province or territory's announcement of how it will spend the money. Make sure it is spent on licensed regulated child care!

Funding to support the work of the CCAAC is provided by Status of Women Canada (Women's Program), and by Human Resources Development Canada.

Annual General Meeting

CCAAC members are invited to our annual general meeting, on Friday, June 20, 5pm, at Les Suites Hotel, 130 Besserer, Ottawa.

All are welcome!

The Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care ¹

Following are some key provisions of the framework agreement.

In March, federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for social services agreed to make additional investments in regulated child care to further promote child development and support the participation of parents in employment or training.

Each province/territory will determine its own child care priorities within this initiative.

Governments are to ensure effective mechanisms for Canadians to participate in developing early learning and child care priorities and reviewing outcomes.

Funding

Investments for early childhood development are to be incremental, predictable and sustained over the long-term. The provinces and territories will retain the ability to address local needs and priorities.

Public Reporting

Ministers will report annually to Canadians on their progress in improving access to affordable, quality early learning and child care programs and services, beginning with a baseline report for 2002-2003. Governments commit to publicly release baseline information by the end of November 2003; annual reports will be released beginning in November 2004.

¹ *While the Government of Québec supports the general principles of the Early Childhood Development Initiative and the Early Learning and Child Care Initiative, it did not participate in developing these initiatives. Québec has made a significant investment in child care and has a comprehensive and innovative family policy that includes \$5-a-day child care.*

Visit childcareadvocacy.ca

We recently reorganized our web site to make it easier for you to use. You'll find more up-to-date information on what's happening in child care and ways to get involved in advocating for a publicly supported child care system that's accessible, affordable and inclusive.

Visit www.childcareadvocacy.ca today!

Linking parents from coast to coast to coast

Calling all parents to the Parents' Network – a virtual advocacy network set up by Parent Voices. To join, just add your name to the e-mail list (contact info@parentvoices.ca). You will receive information about current child care issues, new materials on the web pages, and current regional and pan-Canadian child care advocacy activities and campaigns. Participating in the network will also help you get in touch with parents in your province/territory who are concerned about child care issues and want to link up with other parents and child care advocates.

The network is just one of Parent Voices' outreach initiatives. These activities are about connecting parents with other parents, supporting opportunities for learning more about provincial/territorial/federal child care issues through the web pages (www.parentvoices.ca) and making sure parent perspectives are an important component of child care advocacy activities and campaigns.

The Parents' Network

Parent Voices brings together parents who are working for the right of all children to access a quality child care system – a child care system that is publicly funded, regulated, affordable and welcoming to all children regardless of their abilities/disabilities.

In several provinces and territories, many parents are working closely with others in local activities. Parents are adding their advocacy voices by sending e-mails and writing to elected representatives; writing letters to newspapers; attending town hall meetings and community forums; and calling into radio talk shows to speak out about child care.

In each province and territory where we have established links with parents, Parent Voices has identified one or more representatives to the Network. Four Parent Reps recently participated in the CCAAC Cross-Country Check Up, Council of Child Care Advocates meetings and held a Parents' Network meeting. We have developed terms of reference to

outline the responsibilities and opportunities for the Parents' Network Reps and the CCAAC.

For more information about the Parents' Network, be sure to contact Project Consultant Dianne Goldberg at info@parentvoices.ca.

Parents speak out about child care

"Canada must have a national child care strategy because it's the right thing to do for Canadians. I know parents want it and our children deserve it."

Excerpt from CBC Commentary on the need for a publicly supported child care system, by Sharon Gregson, Simon Fraser University Child Care Society, Burnaby, BC.

"The quality of care for our children is paramount to the future economic and social success of our nation. Child care is a shared responsibility. It is time that all governments showed leadership to support the early years of our children."

From a pre-budget letter in the Guelph, ON Mercury, by Sheri Hincks, Chair, University of Guelph Child Care and Learning Centre Parents Advisory Council

"Presently, in New Brunswick, approximately 10% of children aged 0-12 and only 5% of infants have access to licensed child care services. Parents need to be able to choose within a quality framework. After all, our children deserve no less. Quality child care experiences for children in Canada shouldn't be a matter of luck."

From post-budget statement, by Parents for Quality Care, Moncton, N.B. Jody Dallaire, spokesperson

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