

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

BULLETIN

323 CHAPEL STREET · OTTAWA, ON K1N 7Z2
PHONE: 613-594-3196 · FAX: 613-594-9375
ccaac@istar.ca · www.childcareadvocacy.ca

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Message from the Chair

We want the building blocks of good child care

As this bulletin goes to press, the daily newspaper headlines are speculating about a spring election, and there's talk of an imminent federal announcement of a child care deal with the provinces and territories. By the time our readers receive this bulletin, the landscape could be very different from the way it appears today. (Visit our web site, www.childcareadvocacy.ca, for updates if an election is called.) Right now, we know we have a downpayment on child care in the form of the federal budget commitment of \$5 billion over five years, but we lack a child care agreement with the concrete accountability measures, sound policies and clear implementation plans that we need to build a system that offers all children in Canada the same chance at a good start in life.

Our strategy for the next six months includes:

- Calling on the federal government to reach an agreement with the provinces and territories that includes our four building blocks of adequate funding, strong accountability, child care legislation and expansion in the non-profit sector.
- Insisting on conditions and accountability measures before provinces and territories can access federal funding, and pressing for the introduction of child care legislation and a commitment to funding beyond five years. (See CCAAC's budget analysis at www.childcareadvocacy.ca/resources/pdf/federal_budget_promise.pdf.)
- Planning for a May cross-Canada tour with a representative from Australia's National Association of Community Based Children's Services, to highlight that country's experience with corporate child care and accreditation.

- Planning for child care meetings in the Atlantic provinces with child care coalitions and the community, and child care ministers and officials.
- Highlighting child care as a women's issue when the Women's Global Charter for Humanity (part of the World March of Women) comes to various regions in Canada in May.

Campaign successes

Since the Building Blocks campaign was launched at the Winnipeg child care conference last November, advocates from coast to coast to coast have worked tirelessly lobbying and mobilizing, flooding ministers of child care with postcards, building blocks and letters. We kept our message front and centre in the public arena and influenced the debate through a focused political action and communications strategy that included monitoring the child care talks in Vancouver, presenting building blocks to the ministers at a media event and lobbying for the federal budget to make good on the child care promise. Throughout this period we received an enormous amount of newspaper, radio and television coverage.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the hard work of our board and council members, and our many allies from the labour, women's, disability, anti-poverty, social justice and student movements. We are also incredibly grateful to the organizations and unions that provided financial support for the campaign.

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Welcome Monica!

It's a real pleasure to welcome **Monica Lysack**, CCAAC's newly appointed executive director. Monica comes to us from Regina, Saskatchewan, where she worked in child care policy for the provincial government and was a member of the federal/provincial/territorial early childhood working group. She began her child care career as a child care worker in a non-profit centre and has worked as a director of unionized and non-unionized centres, and taught post-secondary early childhood education in aboriginal and non-aboriginal programs. Monica joined us in an acting position during the most intense period of our Building Blocks campaign, taking up this formidable challenge with enthusiasm and ability. CCAAC is very fortunate to have an executive director with such a broad range of experience and depth of expertise to help us move forward.

We'll miss you Maryann!

It's very difficult to say goodbye to **Maryann Bird**, CCAAC's executive director for the past five years. Maryann was the backbone of our organization during a vital, exciting and energizing period for child care and child care advocates. She was critical to CCAAC's development these past few years into a more visible, broadly based and influential organization in the sector. We are very lucky to have had the benefit of her strategic guidance, tireless devotion to child care and her many strong skills. We wish her all the best in this next phase of her life in BC as a consultant — hopefully she will also find some well earned time to relax! We know she will continue to stand with us on the front line for child care.

More changes

Over the past few months we also said good-bye to several outstanding board members — committed advocates who have provided support and strong leadership to CCAAC:

- BC representative **Lynell Anderson**, who is now project director for our *Making the Connections* project.

- Ontario representative **Cheryl DeGras**, co-president and a past executive director of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC).

We also welcome on the board two equally committed and skilled new members:

- **Sharon Gregson**, from the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC.
- **Kira Heineck**, OCBCC's Executive Director.

Other important news

CCAAC's **Making the Connections Project** is in full swing (see insert in this newsletter.) We've written to all provincial and territorial ministers of child care and received some enthusiastic responses. We also put in place a steering committee of regional representatives from a variety of sectors to guide and support the project's work, as well as a reference group to provide technical expertise and guidance.

Just approved: a three-year project grant from Status of Women Canada for **Building Women's Equality in Child Care Policy**. The project is about developing child care policy responsive to the equality needs of women, at the same time as it meets the needs of children, families and the broader society. The project also aims to build the child care advocacy capacity of women and to carry forward the work of Making the Links: Child Care and Social Justice, and SOS Childcare: Seeing and Solving the Child Care Crisis (SOS). The SOS project gave rise to our strategy paper, *From Patchwork to Framework*, the foundation for much of our current work.

~ Debra Mayer, Chairperson

www.childcareadvocacy.ca

If you haven't visited our web site lately, don't delay! It's updated weekly to bring you current child care news.

Cross-country check-up

Since our last bulletin, four provincial child care coalitions have been formed or reborn: in Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan. Clearly, advocacy is on the move in Canada!

At the recent Council of Advocates meeting, council representatives reported on developments in their region or sector. Here are just some highlights of their reports (note that not all representatives were able to attend or submit reports):

- In **Newfoundland and Labrador**, the last provincial budget raised the eligibility threshold for low-income families requiring child care services from \$13,800 to \$20,280 for 2005, with a further increase to \$22,080. The newly formed coalition collected signatures from about 600 advocates for the Building Blocks campaign.
- In **Nova Scotia**, centres could face a decrease in funding while attempting to promote increased quality because of grants that are based on minimum child/staff ratios. The Non-Profit Directors Coalition of Nova Scotia, the Non-Profit Directors Association (Central Region), and a committee working to re-establish a coalition of friends of non-profit child care are working on promotion and education around non-profit delivery.
- **New Brunswick** advocates sent more than 1,600 Building Blocks campaign letters to the provincial child care minister. Parents for Quality Care is mobilizing again. The coalition was involved in the pre-budget consultations on services to families, is developing connections with the province's Coalition for Pay Equity, and continuing its work with the Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
- The good news in **Quebec** is that there are 185,000 \$7-a-day child care spaces with an additional 10,000 to 12,000 new spaces expected by the end of 2006, and that a coalition has been formed to defend the family policy against government attempts to weaken it. The bad news: the provincial government is cutting \$60 million from the non-profit centres de la petite enfance, and the corporate child care chain, Kinderville, has opened more than a dozen centres.
- In **Ontario**, the province's "Best Start" plan for children falls short in a number of key areas, including continued reliance on the user pay/subsidy system, perpetuating the fragmented approach to child care, not addressing the needs of children aged 0-3 and 6-12, failing to protect against expansion of commercial child care and not including a plan for staff or a commitment to new provincial funding. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care has engaged community members on the need for action to get the government to *Build It Right!*, and held a full lobby of all MPPs in April.
- The **Manitoba** government says it will spend all of its federal Foundations money on regulated child care. Advocates feel the government is committed to a system and to using federal funding the "right way". However, they are disappointed that a slower first- and second-year rollout of federal monies means the province will have to walk when *everyone* is primed to run! The Manitoba Child Care Association has prioritized people, places and spaces in their recommendations to government. The Manitoba Government and General Employees Union gathered over 10,000 signed postcards to the provincial government on the plight of Manitoba's early childhood educators and much-needed changes to the child care system.
- The newly formed Early Learning and Child Care Coalition of **Saskatchewan** "will provide a forum to develop a community-based action plan, with timelines and targets to move from the current patchwork of services and programs to an integrated system." The coalition brings together parents, early learning and child care educators, community organizations, unions, aboriginal organizations and others who support the development of a high quality child care system in the province.

- **Alberta's** accreditation system has received 250 applications from its 587 centres and agencies to undertake the process for receiving formal accreditation. The program's aim is to set standards for quality and recognize achievement in child care. It is the first child care accreditation program in Canada.
- **British Columbia's** child care advocates are in the midst of a critical provincial election campaign. While cuts to child care have stopped for now, in the absence of a public plan, the government appears to favour expansion of unlicensed, minimally regulated child care. The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC is working to get child care supporters out to vote on May 17, provide advocates with election tools and strengthen the links with social justice partners.
- The outcome of the **Parent Voices** project has been to engage a number of parents who continue to reach out to other parents in their regions. Parents are spreading the advocacy message for quality, accessible, affordable, inclusive, universal child care programs in meetings with groups and government officials, involvement in campaigns, doing media interviews and through letters to the editor.
- Rural Voices has distributed a national discussion paper to strengthen the voice and participation of citizens living in **rural, remote and northern communities** in the development of a pan-Canadian child care strategy. The consultation process included an e-mail and fax feedback process, a series of teleseminars and a web survey.
- The Canadian Association for Community Living is actively advocating for **inclusion** to be a meaningful principle — not just words on paper — in the development of a child care system. The association sent a letter to Minister Dryden and issued a news release about the mechanisms required to ensure the development of and investment in an inclusive strategy.
- The Canadian **Labour** Congress's International Women's Day postcard campaign to the Prime Minister focused on the need for a quality child care system. The CLC also worked with labour councils and federations of labour to lobby MPs and MPPs about child care. The Canadian Union of Public Employees launched the action-oriented web site, www.buildchildcare.ca, and commissioned a legal opinion on the dangers of allowing corporate child care chains to set up shop in Canada.

AGM 2005 rescheduled

Please join us!

CCAAC's annual general meeting, originally scheduled for Friday, June 24, will now be held on **Friday, September 30 at Les Suites Hotel (Byward Room), 130 Besserer Street, Ottawa**. The AGM will be followed by a Board of Directors and Council of Advocates meeting on Saturday, October 1 at Volunteer Canada, 330 Gilmour Street.

Add your voice: become a member

Add your voice to help us send a louder message about the need for a universal, accessible and inclusive high quality child care system in Canada by joining the CCAAC today. Visit: www.childcareadvocacy.ca/about/memform.html.

As a member, did you know you can send an email to info@childcareadvocacy.ca to receive our daily news digest, Child Care News, bringing you the latest media stories on child care?

Funding to support the work of the CCAAC is provided by Status of Women Canada (Women's Program) and by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program.

Child Care Policy: Making the Connections

The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada's latest project, *Making the Connections*, aims to support communities and provincial and territorial governments to better understand and analyze early learning and child care policy and investments.

"The overall goal of this project is to advance the evidence-based development of quality child care services across Canada," said project director Lynell Anderson. "The project also aims to enhance public accountability and transparency, and improve understanding and analysis of public funding of child care."

Anderson is a BC-based Certified General Accountant and child care advocate who has worked with community groups, governments, and businesses for more than 20 years, and has developed specific expertise in child care finances and related policy development.

Her project work will include compiling baseline public information on early learning and child care, developing an analysis template and providing other tools and resources to support capacity building within governments and across communities,* including popularized data reports in a comparable format wherever possible.

Making the Connections will look at child care policy and funding developments under the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Agreement, the Multilateral Framework Agreement and any new child care agreements reached between the federal, provincial and territorial governments. CCAAC executive director Monica Lysack, who was previously a member of the FPT working group and was involved in developing the reporting criteria for the ECD and Multilateral agreements, will also contribute her expertise to the project.

The project enhances CCAAC's long history of working with groups across the country committed to child care. It also strengthens the organization's work with federal, provincial and territorial governments at a critical time in the development of child care policy in Canada.

Making the Connections is funded by the federal government's Social Development Partnerships Program.

* This project does not include participation from Quebec.