

OPEN LETTER TO PREMIERS OF PROVINCES/TERRITORIES*

February 27, 2003

Dear Premiers:

We are writing about current developments on child care. As you know, our community has been most enthusiastic about the ongoing negotiations on an intergovernmental agreement on child care services that would simultaneously meet three goals:

- Early learning for children
- Non-parental care that allows parents to work or study
- Support for parenting.

From current research, we know that early childhood education and care services are most likely to meet these goals when they are:

- Accessible to all children of all abilities/disabilities regardless of parents' socio-economic status or workforce participation;
- Staffed by well-paid and supported early childhood educators;
- Informed by an understanding of how children learn, with specific learning goals and opportunities for learning embedded in play-based activities;
- Delivered in well-designed child and family-friendly physical environments that promote children's health, development and safety;
- Supportive of parents' primary responsibility for their children and their active participation in their children's early learning and development.
- Supported by a planned, coherent approach to high quality care and education, by public funding and by thorough regulation.

We believe that public policy should include accountability mechanisms such as public reporting on public funding, on compliance with quality standards and monitoring of progress toward achieving the child care system described above. We have been encouraged by Minister Jane Stewart's commitment that the intergovernmental agreement will focus on regulated child care and public reporting as key underpinnings of accountability and high quality.

We urge your province to sign onto this intergovernmental agreement to ensure that this very first step toward a national approach to early childhood education and child care becomes a reality. We believe that a positive outcome for this agreement at this time is essential for future developments that support not only children and families but Canadian society.

In sum, provincial/territorial participation in this agreement at this time is in the best interest of Canadians in all regions.

We also believe that your participation would be consistent with the strong public support for high quality child care. A recent public opinion poll demonstrates public recognition for the contribution that quality child care makes to our society and economy; 90% either strongly agree (44%) or agree (46%) with the statement “I believe government could do more to ensure that all Canadians have access to quality child care”.

We hope that with your province’s commitment, an intergovernmental agreement on child care will become a reality. The child care community looks forward to continuing to work with all levels of government as Canada begins to build a new system of support for children and families. We believe that this must be a mainstream element in a 21st century society.

Yours truly,

BC Child Care Advocacy Forum
Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada
Campaign Against Child Poverty
Campaign 2000
Canadian Autoworkers Union
Canadian Child Care Federation
Canadian Council on Social Development
Canadian Labour Congress
Canadian Union of Postal Workers
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada
Child Care Coalition of Manitoba
Child Care Human Resources Roundtable
Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto
Children’s Aid Society of Toronto
Citizens for Public Justice
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Commission on Justice and Peace-Canadian Council of Churches
Elementary School Teachers’ Association - Ontario
Edmonton Social Planning Council
Family Service Association of Toronto
Feeding Calgary’s Children Initiative
First Call - BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
Jewish Women International of Canada
KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
Manitoba Child Care Association

National Council of Women of Canada
Ontario Association of Social Workers
Ontario Campaign 2000
Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
Ontario Public Health Association
Ottawa-Carleton Child Poverty Action Group
Peel Poverty Action Group
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario
Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario
Social Planning and Research Council - British Columbia
Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth
Social Planning Council of Winnipeg
Social Policy Research Unit, University of Regina
SpecialLink: The Child Care Inclusion Network
Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care
United Church of Canada
YWCA of/du Canada

* Please note that this letter has not been sent to the Premier of Québec. Québec has already begun to build a system of high quality universally accessible child care.

cc. The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister, Human Resources Development Canada
The Honourable John Manley, Minister of Finance, Canada