

## OPEN LETTER

May 21, 2003

The Honourable John Manley  
Minister of Finance

Dear Mr. Manley:

Since the child care announcement in the February federal budget, there has been considerable discussion in our community about the budget announcement for child care. We are writing at this time to make you aware of our concerns about this.

We would first like to express our satisfaction that child care was recognized in the federal budget as a line item. This is an important advance, particularly since child care was viewed as a non-issue in the federal government for almost a decade. In this regard, we were pleased to hear your pre-budget comment that "child care is more than baby sitting", echoing, it would seem, not only the Throne Speech's commitment to "quality child care and early learning" but also our perspective that child care and early childhood education should be inseparable as they are in many other nations.

Second, we would like to express our support for the Multilateral Agreement of Early Learning and Care announced as a first step toward a national child care program by Minister Stewart in March. We very much supported your government's insistence that federal funds for child care to be transferred to provinces/territories must be spent only on regulated and monitored child care and that adequate public reporting will be required. We believe that these requirements are a minimum for the quality child care and early learning as well as the public accountability promised in the Throne Speech. We have made our views on this clear to Minister Stewart and would expect that the child care community will have an opportunity for input into the policy processes as they develop. It is our view that while the Agreement is a welcome first step, much more developed policy and processes will be required for a national program of early childhood education and care.

That being said, however, we would like to express our profound disappointment with the financial side of this equation. As you may know, we had been looking for the federal budget to provide a large enough infusion of federal funds to provide both provincial enthusiasm for the architecture and momentum to take the policy into the future. We were most disappointed that the funds were so skewed to the latter part of the five year period. The \$25 million in the first year and \$75 in the second year scarcely reflect the importance of child care both for early learning and support for parents as highlighted in the Throne Speech and budget. While we urged the provinces to sign on to the intergovernmental agreement as it was under negotiation, we are dubious about how the meager funds allocated in the first two years will benefit children and families "on the ground".

From a longer-term viewpoint, we are most concerned that the annual funds allocated over the five year span are inadequate to even begin to meet the needs of Canada's almost five million children (0-12 years) and their families. To put this in perspective, it is useful to reflect on the fact that the anticipated fifth year transfer to provinces/territories of \$350 million is approximately what your government was spending for child care through the Canada Assistance Plan when it was abolished in 1996 (\$320 million in 1996 dollars). Recognizing that the cost of a mature early childhood education and care system has been calculated at approximately \$10 billion annually (about 1% of GDP), we do not believe that the slow pace of public investment is adequate for this important social program. Our long term goal is high

quality early childhood education and care that is inclusive of all children including those with disabilities in every region of Canada that will (to echo the commitment made by your government and provincial/territorial governments) enable each child to get the best possible start in life. With this in mind, we expect to revisit this allocation in future budget years.

We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss our concerns about how Canada will finance early learning and care in the future.

Yours truly,

Association of Early Childhood Educators Newfoundland - Labrador  
Association of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario  
Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada  
Child Care Advocacy Forum, British Columbia  
Campaign 2000  
Campaign Against Child Poverty  
Canadian Association for Community Living  
Canadian Association of Food Banks,  
Canadian Association of Social Workers  
Canadian Autoworkers Union  
Canadian Housing and Renewal Association  
Canadian Labour Congress  
Canadian Teachers' Federation  
Canadian Union of Postal Workers  
Canadian Union of Public Employees  
Charles Pascal, Atkinson Foundation  
Certification Council of Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia  
Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto  
Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada  
Child Poverty Action Group  
Durham Child Poverty Task Force (Ontario)  
Family Service Association of Toronto  
First Call: Child and Youth Coalition (British Columbia)  
Jewish Women International of Canada  
Manitoba Child Care Association  
National Council of Women of Canada)  
Nellie's (Toronto)  
North End Community Health Centre (Halifax)  
Ontario Association of Social Workers  
Ontario Campaign 2000  
Ottawa-Carleton Child Poverty Action Group  
Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care  
Ontario Federation of Labour  
Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation  
Peace and Justice Commission, Canadian Council of Churches  
PEI, Early Childhood Development Association  
Save the Children Canada  
Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth (Ontario)  
Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

Social Policy Research Unit, University of Regina  
Social Planning and Research Council (British Columbia)  
Specialink: The Child Care Inclusion Network  
Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care  
The Urban Core Support Network (New Brunswick)  
Yukon Child Care Association  
YWCA of/du Canada  
YWCA Vancouver

cc. The Right Honourable Jean Chretien, Prime Minister of Canada  
The Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Human Resources Development