



**Open Letter to Federal, Provincial and Territorial Elected Representatives from
across Canada**

CCAAC, Ottawa, 11 Feb 03

Dear Elected Representatives:

After many years of advocating, we had been encouraged that federal, provincial and territorial officials were moving towards an agreement on a national child care strategy. Until very recently, the signals were hopeful: we had understood that the emphasis would be on "getting the architecture right" of any new plan. This is a first, and long overdue, step towards the system of equitable, high quality early childhood education and care that Canada needs.

There is widespread support for dedicating new federal funds to regulated, affordable, publicly accountable child care services. A recent poll conducted by Millward Brown Goldfarb indicates that 90% of Canadians support a national child care plan and that an overwhelming 96% believe that the quality of Canadian child care can be improved by "regulating all child care services to meet quality standards." In light of this, we are dismayed to hear that there is not unanimous commitment from the provinces and territories to building a system of regulated services. According to this week's national press, while "other provinces have reacted favourably, the response from Queen's Park (Ontario) so far is that it's interested only as long as it has the flexibility to spend on a range of programs" and that "some provinces, notably Ontario, have not agreed to spend any new money on daycare."

We believe that the "right architecture" for a pan-Canadian strategy for early childhood education and care includes binding principles and must be embedded in a federal/provincial/territorial agreement. This agreement is needed now. The architecture will provide the foundation for a policy and funding framework. This will support the development and delivery of quality child care services that ensure a learning program for children while simultaneously supporting parents to work and study.

It would be most desirable if all provinces and territories participated in such an agreement. (*) However, if that is not feasible, we encourage the federal government to go ahead and implement the agreement in 2003 with those that agree to its principles. This plan cannot be held hostage by uncooperative provinces and territories. Canadians want public accountability and regulated care as part of any new agreement. In order to achieve this, as the federal Liberal Caucus Social Policy Committee has proposed, there may be other ways to do it, including federal-municipal agreements in some provinces.

We urge all provinces and territories to act in the best interests of all Canadians by working collaboratively to secure an agreement to provide regulated, accountable and quality child care.

We congratulate those of you who are prepared to move forward on what would be the most important new social policy in the last decade.

We urge the federal government to dedicate sufficient funds to this new plan, thereby encouraging forward movement on this sound public policy.

Please be assured that we are encouraging our colleagues and others, especially parents, to contact you as well. The vast majority of Canadians believe that universally accessible, regulated, high quality early childhood education and care should be more than just a vision.

We are counting on you as our elected representatives to do all you can to translate this vision into reality.

Sincerely,

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and partners across Canada including:

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
Manitoba Child Care Association
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of British Columbia
Canadian Child Care Federation
Child Care Human Resources Round Table
Campaign 2000
Canadian Labour Congress
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW)
Canadian Auto Workers (CAW)

(We recognize that Quebec is well on their way to developing a universal, publicly funded program that blends care and early childhood education.*