

## All Our Children Deserve Quality Care

The Vancouver Status of Women has been concerned with child care since our inception in 1971. We join parents, broad-based community groups, women's organizations, unions, child care coalitions, and several government commissions in recommending a publicly funded non profit child care system.

### Neighbourhood Child Care Centres

VSW endorses a neighbourhood model of child care centres. These centres would receive direction from a board made up of parents, child care workers and community members, who could respond to the unique needs of their community while maintaining quality standards.

VSW recommends comprehensive programming that would include:

- full- and part-time care for infants and preschoolers
- out-of-school care for school-aged children
- special care programs that would lead to the integration of disabled children
- child care geared to the schedules of seasonal and shift workers
- private home child care
- support services, e.g. toy libraries

### No User Fees

VSW advocates immediate operational grants to non-profit centres, capital cost grants to create new child care spaces, and provisions for the federal government to negotiate with the provinces to share costs in a system that would eventually have no user fees for parents.

## Child Care Facts

### An Increasing Need....

- 46.5 percent of single parent families led by women are living in poverty
- more than 60 percent of two-parent families would be living in poverty if the mother did not work outside the home
- in 1986, 56 percent of women with children under the age of three were working in the labour force

### Unavailable....

- in 1985, there were 2 1/2 million children in Canada whose mothers worked or attended school. Over 90 percent of these children received unlicensed, unregulated care.
- over 62,000 school-aged children care for themselves outside of school on a regular basis

### Worker Subsidized....

- child care workers, mostly women, subsidize child care costs with low salaries, few benefits, and poor working conditions. The average wage in 1984 was \$15,000 - about half that of an elementary school teacher.

### Underregulated....

- there are no national standards for child care. Each province sets its own standards of governing safety and fire regulations, staff/child ratio, staff qualifications, etc. Some of these standards are minimal, e.g. in Alberta the only qualification you need to be a child care worker is age - you should be at least 18.



*The new proposals put a little more money in the pockets of Canadian parents and create very few additional child care spaces.*

### Make Your Opinions Known

Canadians need more affordable child care spaces for their children - 400,000 spaces are not enough! And the kickbacks to parents through the tax system don't begin to address their child care expenses.

We encourage residents of British Columbia to write their MLA and the Minister of Social Services and Housing. Ask them to support grants to non-profit child care facilities.

Contact your federal MP and the Minister of Health and Welfare. Tell them you want to see funding to create even more licensed child care.

### For More Information Contact

Vancouver Status of Women  
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# Quality Child Care... will the promise be kept?



Vancouver Status of Women

## Canada's Child Care

Canada's child care system is in crisis. Women with young children are returning to the work force, many out of urgent economic need. Their children require care, but less than one child out of ten currently has access to a licensed child care space. Child care is almost nonexistent in rural and native communities. And spaces are in short supply for immigrant, disabled and very young children.

In 1987 a child care space cost parents between \$3500-\$5000 per year. Spaces for infants and disabled children were more expensive.

As a result of inadequate and expensive child care, many women are severely limited in their employment choices. Some are forced to choose welfare.

### Parents Prefer Licensed Child Care

Most Canadian children receive informal care from caregivers who have no special training. Although some parents may prefer this arrangement, most do not. The Abella Commission on Equality in Employment quoted a recent survey that found:

*"An expressed preference among parents of virtually all classes and ethnic backgrounds for supervised and licensed group daycare for preschool children."*

In 1986 the Special Parliamentary Committee on Child Care heard from 975 groups and individuals across the country. A clear consensus emerged that child care outside the home could be a positive experience for both children and families. The majority favoured a universally accessible, publicly funded system of non profit child care.

## Government Proposals Won't Work

The federal government proposed spending 5.4 billion dollars for child care in the next 7 years. Approximately 60 per-

cent of the budget will go to directly fund child care facilities, providing operational and capital cost (start up) grants. The remaining 40 percent will compensate parents for some of their child care expenses through tax deductions and tax credits.

### Funding Profits Not OK

Almost half the total budget will be directed to operational grants to both profit and non-profit facilities.

Child care can be a highly profitable business. But quality child care is not compatible with profit making goals - profits are made by cutting corners. For commercial child care centres this may mean low salaries for staff, poor quality food and equipment for children, and higher user fees for parents.

In non-profit centres, parents can influence decisions affecting quality by participating on boards and committees.

Quality child care is maintained by licensing standards, determined and monitored by each province. Some provinces have very minimal standards. And the commercial child care sector has lead lobbying efforts in some parts of Canada to reduce standards and licensing regulations.

### A Shortage of Licensed Spaces

In 1987, over 2 million Canadian children were in need of full- or part-



time child care. The federal government plans to double the number of licensed child care spaces to 400,000 through their capital cost grants to centres. By 1995 there will be a licensed child care space for one in six children whose mothers work or study - and that assumes there will be no increase in demand, contrary to the trend of the last ten years.

The government talks about "choice" for parents. What they mean is the right to choose between licensed care, informal care, and one spouse (almost always the mother) staying home to care for children. It is highly questionable that a shortage of licensed care spaces really allows "choice".

### Provincial Cooperation Needed

The operational and start-up grants to child care facilities are a cost-sharing program between the federal and provincial governments. The federal government proposes to meet 75 percent of the costs, with the remaining 25 percent to be met by each province.

Some provinces are opposed to direct funding to child care facilities. British Columbia is one of them.

Depending on the future of the Meech Lake Accord, any province that does not

want to participate in a new national program may be able to opt out.

### Tax Deductions Benefit High Income Families

The federal government proposes a tax deduction increase from \$2000 to \$4000 for families that have receipts for the care of a child under the age of six.

These deductions benefit high income families much more than low or middle income families. A family earning \$100,000 will receive a deduction worth more than \$900 a year, while a family earning \$10,000 will only receive a deduction worth \$187. Families with incomes too low to pay taxes will not benefit at all.

Furthermore, these deduction do not come close to meeting the total cost of child care expenses, estimated at an average of \$3500.

### Tax Credits Inadequate

Parents staying at home with their children or using informal, unreceipted child care will receive an additional \$100 tax credit for each child. This will increase to \$200 in the second year of the program, for a total of \$724 per child per year.

For the many parents using informal, unreceipted care, this credit increase will cover the cost of baby sitting for about two weeks.

As an incentive to women to stay home with their children, it is a hollow gesture that fails to recognize the economic value of women's work.

The tax credit proposal can only be seen as an effort by the federal government to encourage traditional family child care arrangements - a philosophy that does not address the reality of most Canadian women.