

Bulletin

National Child Care Policy Looking Back

The Honourable Perrin Beatty, Minister of National Health and Welfare, recently said that his government would make good its promise of introducing a new funding mechanism for child care before the next federal elections (which should be held in 1992). Child care advocates are keeping their fingers crossed.

The federal government clearly needs to revamp its mechanism for funding child care, the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP). As it now stands, CAP does not provide for the cost-sharing of provincial capital and salary-enhancement grants. Direct operating costs are only cost-shared for subsidized spaces.

The Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association (CDCAA) hopes that any new federal funding mechanism will correct these deficiencies. We also hope that any new federal child care program will not contain the major flaws that riddled the last federal proposal, the proposed Canada Child Care Act. When this Bill died on the order paper at election call in the Fall of 1988, child care advocates collectively breathed a sigh of relief.

THE 1970'S — LACK OF CHILD CARE IS A PROBLEM

Canadians have been demanding relief from a continuing child care crisis for too long. The problem was first highlighted in 1970 by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. The first of its kind, the report of this Royal Commission is respected internationally as a ground-breaking document. On the issue of child care, the report states: "The time is past when society can refuse to provide community child care services in the hope of dissuading mothers from leaving their children and going to work. We are faced with a situation that demands immediate action."

THE EARLY 1980'S — ADVOCATES ORGANIZE

In 1971, the first national conference on day care was held. However, very little government action was generated as a result of this conference.

In September 1982 the second Canadian conference on day care, *Day Care in the '80s*, was held in Winnipeg. The conference brought together 700 advocates, practitioners, early childhood experts and policy makers from across Canada. A tumultuous and exciting conference grabbed media attention and had several concrete outcomes.

Resolutions called for national legislation which

would provide a universally-accessible, high quality, non-profit child care system. The resolution with the most popular support called for the formation of a broad-based advocacy organization to promote the demands of the Conference and put child care on the federal agenda.

As a result of this conference, the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association was born in 1983. Elected representatives from each province and territory began the work of advocating for the establishment of a universally-accessible non-profit publicly-funded child care system.

Child care is not a luxury, it is a necessity. Unless government policy responds to this urgency, we put women, children and the economy of the future at risk.

CDCAA quickly started to flesh out its policies. It produced a series of fact sheets outlining its proposal for a *Child Care Financing Act* (1985, 1986) and commissioned a study, written by economist Monica Townson, on the costs and benefits of a national child care system (1986).

In 1984, our Association contributed to putting child care on the federal agenda during the election campaign. Leaders of all three political parties included action on child care in their lists of promises on women's issues. In the first-ever federal electoral debate on women's issues, which was organized by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), Brian Mulroney promised a parliamentary task force on child care under a Conservative government.

In October of 1984, the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Equality in Employment, chaired by Judge Rosalie S. Abella, submitted its report. On the issue of child care, the report states: "Child care is not a luxury, it is a necessity. Unless government policy responds to this



The Canadian
Day Care Advocacy
Association

L'Association canadienne
pour la promotion des services
de garde à l'enfance

FOR ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE, QUALITY,
NON-PROFIT CHILD CARE

THE CANADIAN DAY CARE ADVOCACY
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urgency, we put women, children and the economy of the future at risk." CDCAA submitted a brief to the Royal Commission calling on the federal government to provide leadership in the formation of public policy on child care, and to establish a Canadian child care financing act as a transitional program.

On March 7, 1986, the Task Force on Child Care, chaired by Dr. Katie Cooke, submitted its report to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the Honourable Walter McLean. The Task Force had been established in 1984 by the previous Liberal government to make recommendations to the Minister on the federal government's role in the development of a system of quality child care in Canada. The Task Force produced 20 well-researched background studies on many aspects of child care.

The report recommended the development of a complementary system of child care and parental leave. The goal of the child care system would be to provide services that are accessible to all children needing them, without regard to parental income or work status. This would be accomplished by negotiating a new federal-provincial/territorial cost-sharing arrangement under which both levels of government would jointly pay for one-half of all operating costs and the full capital and start-up costs of child care programs.

This excellent report, written by a Liberal-appointed task force, was submitted after a change in government to a Conservative government, and was subsequently shelved.

In November 1985, Prime Minister Mulroney, after much prompting from CDCAA and other child care advocates, made good his election promise and announced the establishment of a parliamentary task force known as the Special Committee on Child Care. This Task Force was chaired by Shirley Martin, M.P.

The Special Committee, composed of Members of Parliament (four Conservatives, one Liberal and one NDP), held hearings across the country from March to June 1986. Altogether, 975 individuals and groups came to 31 Canadian cities and towns to tell the Committee their needs, their concerns and their suggestions for the future.

CDCAA published an analysis of the transcripts of the public hearings under the title *Child Care — What*

the Public Said. This analysis showed "...a strong support for universally-accessible child care, for a non-profit operation, for comprehensive services, paid for in part by public dollars directed toward the services, and for some parent fees."

The report of the Special Committee on Child Care, *Sharing The Responsibility*, was tabled in the House of Commons on March 30, 1987. Simultaneously, two minority reports were made public: *Choices in Child Care: Now and the Future* was released by Liberal Special Committee member Lucie Pépin. Member Margaret Mitchell produced the NDP minority report entitled *Caring for Canada's Children*. Both minority reports opposed the Tory majority report.

We strongly criticized the Special Committee report. Among its many recommendations, this report proposed that \$414 million new dollars go to a refundable child care tax credit. This money, CDCAA pointed out, would not create new child care spaces. The creation of new spaces should have been a priority, if the government was to begin to alleviate the child care crisis.

The majority report also recommended a Family and Child Care Act, as a mechanism to cost-share direct grants to child care services with the provinces and territories. However, the amounts of these proposed grants were very small and would have been made available to both profit and non-profit services.

THE 1987 FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL DISCUSSIONS

In January 1987, even before the Special Committee report was tabled, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, the Honourable Jake Epp, started negotiations with the provinces and territories for the development of a new cost-sharing agreement on child care. It had become obvious to everyone that the direction the Special Committee was taking was too timorous and would not be the basis of the government's strategy.

Negotiations with the provinces and territories were fraught with difficulties. Provinces felt they were not fully consulted and had difficulty getting clarification on different aspects of the federal proposal. The child care community was also frustrated because these negotiations were being held behind closed doors.

Nevertheless, CDCAA took every opportunity to provide input to both the federal and provincial/territorial governments during the negotiations. One example, among many, of actions taken by the Association was the Countdown for Child Care Campaign (which was co-sponsored by CDCAA, NAC and the Canadian Labour Congress). The campaign gathered signatures to a petition asking that funds be given to the provinces and territories immediately, to strengthen and expand non-profit child care, while a new cost-sharing agreement was being negotiated; and that this be the first step toward public funding needed to create a system of quality, non-profit child care, accessible to all parents who wish to use it.

We presented the petition, with 125,000 names, to the Honourable Flora MacDonald on the steps of Parliament Hill on June 15, 1987.

On December 15, 1987, the round of federal-provincial/territorial negotiations culminated in the federal government's announcement of its National Strategy On Child Care. This was a \$5.4 billion spending plan spread over seven years: \$2.3 billion would go to tax measures, \$100 million to the Child Care Initiatives Fund and \$3 billion to a proposed Canada Child Care Act which would create 200,000 new child care spaces and provide cost-shared capital and operating grants to child care services. At a news conference held immediately after the announcement, CDCAA criticized the three-part Strategy (see the December 1987 issue of *Vision* for our critique of the National Strategy).

The bill lacked national objectives needed to assure families in all provinces and territories of accessible, high quality child care services.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF THE PROPOSED CANADA CHILD CARE ACT

The Child Care Initiatives Fund was implemented in April 1988. The tax measures became part of the overall tax reform which were voted in September 1988. The proposed Canada Child Care Act (Bill C-144) was tabled in the House of Commons on July 26, 1988 and had grown to become a seven-year, \$4 billion package.

CDCAA opposed this Bill. We believed that passage of the Bill would have moved child care in Canada backwards, not forwards, for three reasons:

- it lacked national objectives needed to assure families in all provinces and territories of accessible, high quality child care services;
- it introduced new limitations to federal child care spending for low and modest income families and limited expansion over seven years to meet only 20% of Canada's child care needs;
- it proposed to set a dangerous precedent for federal spending by funding the operating costs of commercial care, (which is, on average, of poorer quality).

During the Parliamentary Committee hearings, the Bill was opposed by all presenters. An open letter to the Prime Minister, co-signed by 14 national groups, condemned the bill. Despite all the popular opposition, the Bill passed third reading in the House of Commons

on September 26, 1988. However, Senators refused to quickly pass the Bill and started holding hearings. The proposed Act had not been voted on in the Senate when Prime Minister Mulroney called the federal elections in the Fall of 1988. It therefore died on the order paper, to the relief of child care advocates and their growing number of allies. (For a more detailed account of events around Bill C-144, see the March 1989 issue of *Vision*.)

The 1988 election campaign was a one-issue campaign. The debate surrounding the Free Trade Agreement captured all the attention. Although each political party had a detailed position on child care, this issue was not discussed much.

AFTER THE 1988 FEDERAL ELECTIONS

Shortly after the elections, in December 1988, the National Council of Welfare (the federal government's advisory council on welfare) published its report entitled *Child Care: A Better Alternative*. This report outlined the current child care provisions and evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the National Strategy.

The report states, "Our approach would see an end to expensive and wasteful tax breaks that can never help Canada create the child care facilities that it needs." It proposed a different approach to the funding of child care based on a new system of subsidies which would rest on a sliding schedule of fees geared to each family's ability to pay. Under this proposed system, average-income families would pay 30% of child care costs, and no family would pay more than 50%.

As the Conservatives formed the second majority government in a row, child care advocates feared the re-introduction of the Canada Child Care Act. As it turned out, the government chose to do nothing on a new child care funding agreement. Instead, in their February 1990 budget, the government put a ceiling on expenditures for three provinces with respect to CAP and cut the Child Care Initiatives Fund by \$1.75 million (see the article on the budget in the April 1990 issue of *Vision*).

The need for a new piece of child care legislation is more critical than ever. Child care advocates must continue their efforts on behalf of Canadian families. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women's report, in 1970, said: "We are faced with a situation that demands immediate action." Sadly, in 1990, this statement remains as relevant as ever □

LISE CORBEIL VINCENT
CDCAA Member and former Executive Coordinator of
the Association

Strategic Planning

Steering Committee members devoted two days of the meeting in June to a successful session of strategic planning for the Association. Members established goals to allow CDCAA to effectively achieve our objectives in the next few years. A consultant, Mary Lou Murray, facilitated the process. Three resource people, Sharon Hope Irwin, Dorothy Dudek, and Lise Corbeil Vincent, assisted in the planning session.

Copies of the report on this strategic planning session will be available in both languages in August. Let the national office know if you would like a copy

Every Member Counts

Are you concerned about the lack of quality child care at affordable costs? If you are, please become a member of CDCAA. If you are already a member, please pass this issue of the Bulletin along to a neighbour, friend, co-worker or relative and suggest she or he become a member.

You can make a difference

1990 Elections

The nominations and elections were held from February to April, 1990. CDCAA members elected two Steering Committee members and one Official Alternate for their territory or province. The new Steering Committee met in Ottawa from June 7 to 10, and elected a 12-member Board of Directors and a 4-member Executive Committee. These elected representatives have a two-year mandate.

We are pleased to present to you the new Steering Committee and Alternates.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Joanne Oberg, President
Jocelyne Tougas, Vice President
Mab Oloman, Secretary
Sue Wolstenholme, Treasurer

STEERING COMMITTEE

NT Annette Hastie* Ellen Hamilton
YT Joanne Oberg* Suzanne O'Rourke
BC Mab Oloman* Linda Kusz
AB Avril Pike* Karen Charlton
SK Fiona Bishop* Bernadette Vangool
MB Marilyn MacDonald* Ursula Neufeld
ON Laurel Rothman* Penny Bertrand
QC Jocelyne Tougas* Patricia Tuck
NB Dixie Lee Vanraalte*
PE vacant
NS Sue Wolstenholme* Valerie Blaauw
NF Mary Goss* Lynette Billard
*Member of Board of Directors

OFFICIAL ALTERNATE

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YT Diane Gow
BC Paula McRae
AB Sue Carberry
SK Jan Turner
MB Ana Feber
ON Pamela Waddington
QC Diane Binette
NB vacant
PE vacant
NS Rose Aucoin
NF Judith Wells

Ce bulletin est aussi disponible en français.

YES.

I WANT TO JOIN THE CDCAA

I support the goals of the CDCAA and I am enclosing a cheque or money order for my two-year membership fee.



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Association

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