

Childcare: What the Public Said

*An analysis of the transcripts
of the public hearings held across Canada from March to June 1986
by the Parliamentary Special Committee on Childcare*

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I INTRODUCTION

A relatively clear consensus on the main childcare policy issues is emerging in Canada. This study analyzes what the members of the Special Committee on Child Care heard during the public hearings held across the country between March and June, 1986.

The background is set by describing two previous events, considered turning points in the evolution of the public's thoughts on childcare -- the 2nd Canadian Conference on Child Care and the Cooke Task Force on Child Care. The mandate and composition of the Special Committee on Child Care is then described, as is the process of the public hearings held by the Committee. The methodology used for analyzing the transcripts of the public hearings is outlined, and the results of the analysis are presented.

II BACKGROUND: THE 2ND CANADIAN CONFERENCE ON CHILD CARE

In the fall of 1982, the Canadian childcare community met for the first time in ten years, in Winnipeg. For three days, the next decade's childcare policy agenda was debated by more than 750 participants from all ten provinces and the territories. After extensive and passionate debate, the conference voted on resolutions which would provide new approaches to the establishment of a childcare system in Canada.

The conference endorsed the concept of universally accessible, comprehensive childcare services which parents and children would be able to use as easily as they now use kindergartens. The proposed non-compulsory childcare system would include flexible full-time and part-time non-profit programs which would be available in and accountable to every community. Appropriate services would be available in well-regulated childcare centres and family home care settings for all families regardless of labour force participation or income.

The conference participants resolved to continue the work they had begun in Winnipeg with a two-part strategy: first, they called upon the federal

government to establish a parliamentary task force to examine the present state of childcare in Canada and to make recommendations for the future. Second, with the intention of placing childcare high on the public policy agenda, the conference voted to establish a national childcare advocacy organization and, before leaving Winnipeg, elected an interim steering committee with representatives from each province and territory. This organization, the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association, was firmly established as Canada's national childcare advocacy group in the years following the Winnipeg conference.

III TWO FEDERAL CHILDCARE COMMITTEES: THE COOKE TASK FORCE ON CHILD CARE AND THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CHILD CARE

a. The Cooke Task Force on Child Care

In the spring of 1984, the then-Liberal federal government established a federal Task Force on Child Care which would report to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. The Task Force would consider...

"...the need for child care services and paid parental leave in Canada as well as the adequacy of the current system in meeting this need..."

as well as

"...the federal government's role in the development of a system of quality child care in Canada." (Report of the Task Force on Child Care, Status of Women Canada, 1986, xxiii)

The Task Force was composed of four appointed members who possessed expertise in relevant fields, and a cross-Canada geographical perspective. It was chaired by Dr. Katie Cooke, a British Columbia sociologist with a history of interest in womens' issues, and included Renée Edwards, an early childhood specialist and practitioner from Toronto, Dr. Ruth Rose-Lizée, a Montreal-based economist who has a background of research on topics related to childcare, and Jack London, Professor of Law at the University of Manitoba Law School. The

Cooke Task Force acquired an expert staff and began the task of finding solutions to Canada's childcare problems.

In September, 1984, a Conservative federal government was elected with a large majority and for a few weeks it was not clear whether the Cooke Task Force would be allowed to continue its work. The new government decided that the Task Force would carry on but would not hold further regional consultations.

Although the Cooke Task Force was not able to travel to hear verbal submissions from Canadians, it visited some regions of the country, undertook extensive research, received numerous written briefs, and in response to a pamphlet which was mailed with the Family Allowance cheque, it received 7,000 letters from parents. In addition, the twenty-odd pieces of research commissioned by the Task Force constitute the most comprehensive body of information available on childcare in Canada today.

Dr. Cooke and her colleagues reported to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women on March 7, 1986. Supported by the body of research that had been conducted over the previous eighteen months, the Task Force recommended a transformation of childcare in Canada from a welfare system to a public service. This new service would provide high quality, non-profit and user-sensitive childcare delivered through a range of services in order to meet a variety of community needs.

The Task Force called for capital funding grants to develop the variety of services, a public funding arrangement directed to the operation of childcare programs, and a system of extended and better paid parental leave. The report recommended the development of services for parents at home with young children including part-day preschool programs, parent resource centres, toy lending libraries, and childcare information services.

The goal was the establishment of an accessible, comprehensive childcare system which would grow to meet the needs of most Canadian families through the provision of greatly enhanced public policy and funding. In order to achieve this goal, the Task Force called for the public share of funding to increase over a period of fifteen years until parents' fees would cease to exist.

b. The Special Committee on Child Care

Several months before the Cooke Task Force made its report to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the federal government announced that it would fulfill an election promise by creating another task force to study childcare. In November, 1985, the Honourable Jake Epp, Minister of Health and Welfare, announced that a Parliamentary Committee on Child Care would examine childcare needs with particular attention to

"...the requirements of children for care in parental and nonparental arrangements and the preferences of parents in this regard..."

and

"...the role of the federal government in childcare in light of the shared responsibility for childcare among parents, the private sector, the voluntary sector, and government."

The Special Committee on Child Care was composed of Members of the House of Commons: five Conservatives, one Liberal and one New Democrat were appointed. It was to report to the House of Commons no longer than one year from the date of its establishment, November 26, 1986. This deadline was later extended to March 31, 1987. In the winter of 1986, the Special Committee on Child Care hired staff and established a schedule for public hearings across the country.

Before the Special Committee on Child Care began its cross-country tour, The Honourable Walter McLean, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the cabinet minister who had received the report of the Cooke Task Force, appeared before the committee as its first witness. The Liberal member of the Committee, Mme. Lucie Pepin asked Mr. McLean...

"...What is the difference in the objective of the Katie Cooke Task Force and the objective of our task force? How do you see our task force role compared to that of Katie Cooke?"
(Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care 2:10)

Mr. McLean replied:

"I would see that the Cooke Task Force has provided us with the comprehensive analysis and research. The question now of the public views and the testing of this analysis and this recommendation is extremely important...What now is in front of us now is a workable solution...The question, therefore, as politicians is to go out and talk to first of all the people in order to test and find out what models are working best and what types of solutions there are..." (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care 2:10)

The present report is a description and analysis of the public's testimony to the Special Committee on Child Care.

IV THE PUBLIC HEARINGS

It was intended that the public hearings which would be held across the country would be the primary mechanism by which the committee would "go out and talk first of all to the people." They constituted a major portion of the workplan through which the Committee would produce a workable solution to Canada's childcare problems.

The advertisement placed in newspapers across the country was designed to appeal to a broad constituency, and to elicit response from ordinary Canadians. The copy read:

CHILD CARE INVOLVES YOU
PARENTS
GRANDPARENTS
CHILDCARE PROVIDERS
TAXPAYERS
- JUST ABOUT EVERYBODY
THE COMMITTEE WANTS TO
HEAR FROM YOU

Respondents could request a hearing before the Committee by phone or by mail. In addition to groups and individuals who requested an opportunity to appear, committee staff recruited submissions in some provinces.

The processes for application to appear before the committee were not always smooth. In some locations, groups who asked to make an appearance were not offered a place on the agenda, and groups in some communities expressed concerns about the ways in which the committee established a roster of respondents. Some presenters were informed that they had been chosen to appear at the last moment and could not reach the office of the Special Committee to ask for information on the matter. In some cities, evening hearings were cancelled, or were not scheduled, and childcare was not provided for people at any of the hearings.

The range of respondents who appeared before the Special Committee on Child Care represented Canadians from across the political, social, and interest spectrum. Groups from the childcare community such as the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association, Action Day Care, professional early childhood associations, provincial and local advocacy groups and coalitions, of course, presented briefs.

Women's groups included the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, local women's centres, women's commissions affiliated with political parties, immigrant and native women's organizations, and R.E.A.L. Women of Canada who presented briefs in a number of cities.

Trade union appearances represented rank and file workers in many locations. Elected officials from federal, provincial and local levels from various political parties made presentations, as did Children's Aid Societies, children's mental health, social service, and educators' organizations.

Members of the business community voiced their opinions and concerns and included several local Chambers of Commerce, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Association of Women Executives, and several corporations.

The Canadian Jewish Congress, the Children's Unit of the Anglican Church of Canada, and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops all appeared, as did numerous local churches across the country.

In every province and in the territories, parents of small children both in and out of the paid labour force, and staff people working in childcare programs testified at the hearings. Altogether, 975 individuals and large, small, national and local groups, came to 31 Canadian cities and towns to tell the Committee their needs, their concerns and their suggestions for the future.

V THE PUBLIC RECORD: ANALYSIS OF THE SUBMISSIONS TO THE HEARINGS

a. Methodology

Early in the summer of 1986, it became apparent that an analysis of the public submissions would be a useful addition to the discussion which would occur when the Committee's report was released. A scheme to code certain policy-relevant recommendations or proposals was developed based on several considerations:

- . key policy issues or alternatives which had been discussed by groups across the country
- . limitations on the resources available to carry out the work
- . codability within the constraints imposed by time and limited resources.

For example, although recommendations or support for reliance upon regulated rather than unregulated or informal childcare were frequently included in the presentations, it appeared that the variety of approaches would make it a difficult item to code.

As the coding proceeded, it became obvious that the coding scheme had some unanticipated gaps. For example, in some parts of the country, a concern which recurred was the poor quality of existing childcare, and, concomitantly, the need for better-services, a feature which was not coded.

The coding was carried out by a team of volunteers who were familiar with the issues, and who participated in a training session. (A list of coders appears in Appendix A.) They were instructed to take a conservative approach

to interpretation of statements, so that rather than relying on inferences, the coder had to identify a clear recommendation or proposal.

As each statement in the transcripts was coded, the code would be noted beside the statement in the margin. These annotated transcripts will be kept on file by the Child Care Resource and Research Unit at the University of Toronto's Centre for Urban and Community Studies. Coded transcripts were checked by the two researchers who developed the coding scheme.

The recommendations or points of view which were chosen for coding were:

1. Delivery of funds

- a. recommendation that funding be delivered to individual families through a tax deduction, tax credit or voucher;
- b. recommendation that funding be delivered directly to childcare services.

2. Effect of childcare on children and families

- a. childcare outside the family can be a positive experience for children and families;
- b. childcare outside the family is a bad or negative experience for children or families; young children should be at home with a parent.

3. For-profit childcare

- a. recommendation to include for-profit childcare in a childcare system or provide public funding to for-profit care;
- b. recommendation that childcare services be non-profit only or that public funding should be directed only to non-profit services.

4. Universal or targeted accessibility of childcare

- a. recommendation that childcare services or funding be targeted only to needy families;
- b. recommendation that funding and services be universally accessible, a right of all families, or available to all families who need them.

5. Fees to parents

- a. recommendation that parents pay some fee for use of childcare services;
- b. recommendation that childcare services be provided to parents without a fee.

6. Range of family supports

- a. recommendation that parents be encouraged and financially supported to stay at home with young children (beyond parental or maternity leave);
- b. recommendation that parents in the labour force and at home have access to a comprehensive range of childcare choices including full- and part-time group programs, regulated family care, programs for school-aged children, parent-child programs, special services for special needs children, parent education, and maternity or parental leave following birth or adoption.

7. Work-related childcare

- a. recommendation that work-related childcare be the policy of choice;
- b. recommendation that work-related childcare be part of a comprehensive childcare system.

8. Wages of childcare staff

low wages of childcare staff are subsidizing programs; low wages are a major problem; recommendation that low wages of childcare staff be addressed.

It is important to note that most respondents did not present a complete set of recommendations or proposals nor were they likely to discuss all of the issues which were chosen for coding. In fact, some presentations concentrated solely on specific aspects of childcare and made no recommendations which were codable from our point of view. For example, some groups talked only

about the experience of exceptional children, Native or Francophone needs, or the need for high quality infant programs.

In addition, many parents came to tell the members of the Special Committee about their own childcare experiences. Some parents talked about how the absence of appropriate childcare had been an impediment to them, or how good childcare had been an important support. Others described their satisfaction with their experiences as homemakers but did not make any specific recommendations or suggestions.

b. What the public said

A total of 975 groups and individuals made presentations to the Special Committee on Child Care in 31 cities and towns in 10 provinces and 2 territories. Of these, 45 were classified as national groups (a list of the national groups is in appendix A). 188 presentations were made by individuals, usually parents or other interested parties with no affiliation to a childcare program or an organization. The remaining 742 presentations were made on behalf of a variety of provincial and local organizations such as women's groups, labour groups, church groups, childcare groups, community groups, professional associations, local governments and others.

Results -- what the public said -- are presented on the following pages, in graphic and tabular form. Percentages of responses for each province and territory, for national groups, and for individuals are presented, as well as summary figures for each issue coded. For the purposes of calculation, results are presented as a percentage of the number of respondents who addressed that particular issue. The proportion of respondents in each province who addressed each issue may be found in Table 15 and, in summary form, with the summary graphic representation of each issue.

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Table 1
Delivery of funds

11

This table represents the percentages of respondents recommending that funding be directed to childcare services, and those recommending that funds go to individual parents through a tax credit or deduction.

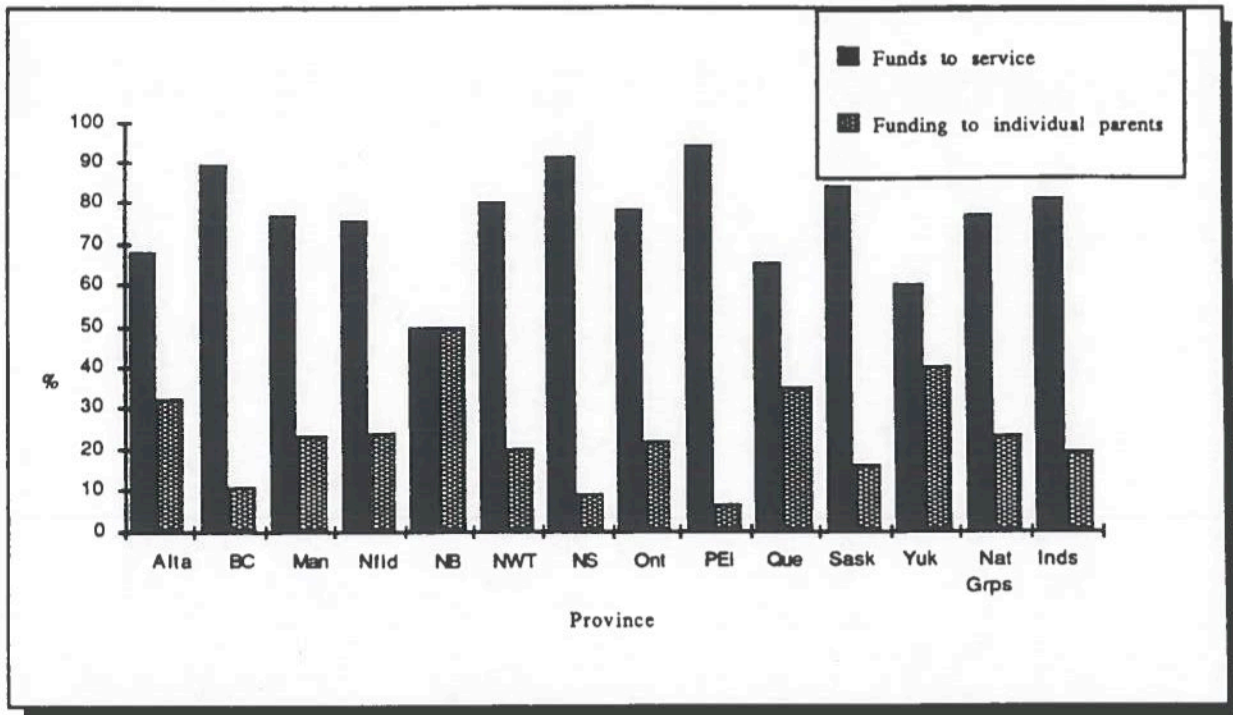


Table 2
Summary: Delivery of funds

This table represents the 519 respondents (53% of the total presenters) recommending that funding be directed to childcare services or those recommending that funds go to individual parents through a tax credit or deduction.

Note that 43 respondents (8.3%) recommended that funding go both to parents and services.

They are counted twice in the table.

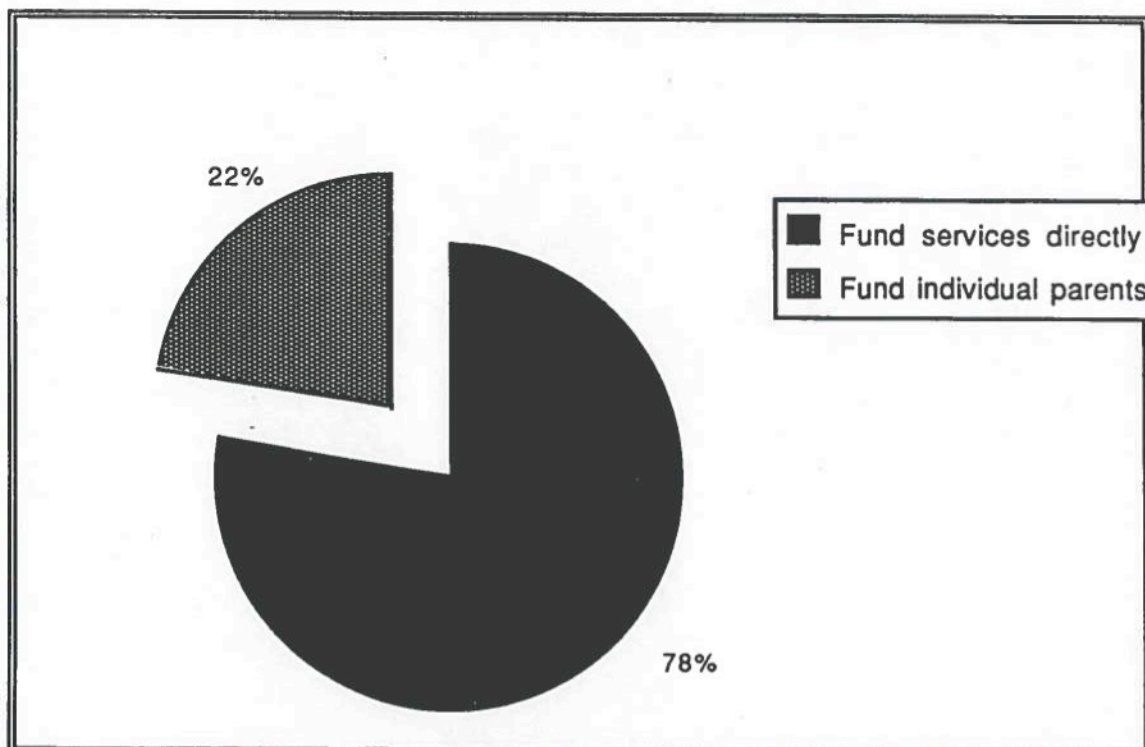


Table 3
Effects of childcare on children and families

12

This table represents the percentage of respondents who presented opinions about the effects of childcare on children and families.

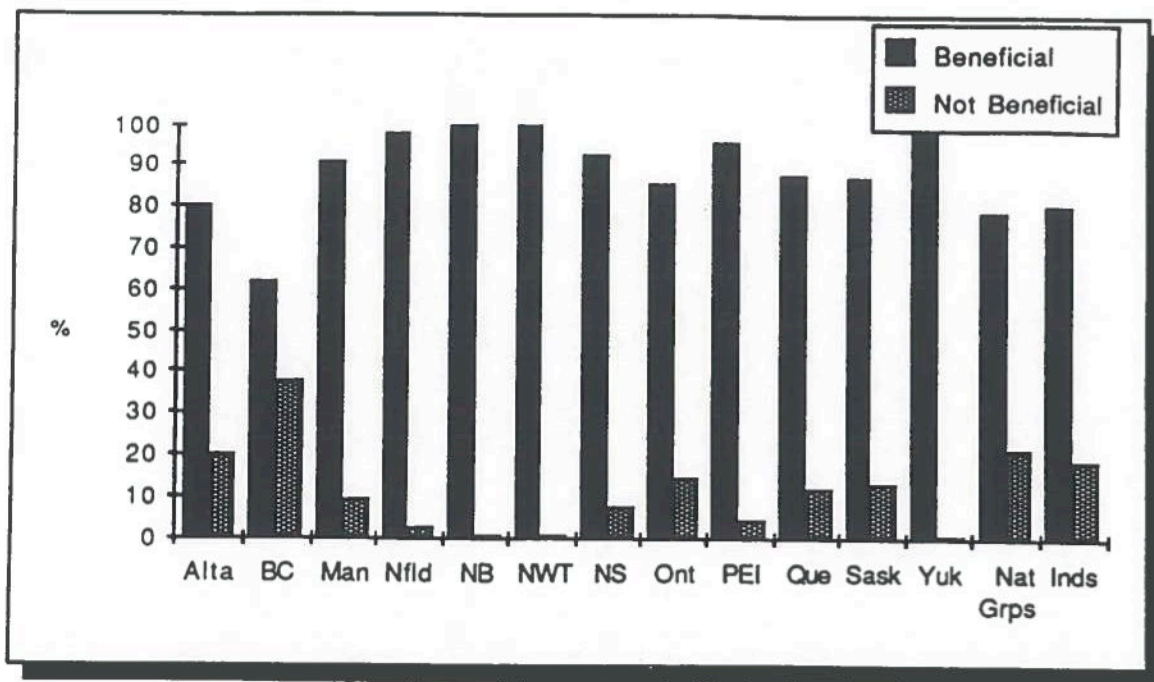


Table 4
Summary: Effects of childcare on children and families

This table represents the 437 respondents (45% of the total presenters) who presented opinions about the effects of childcare on children and families.

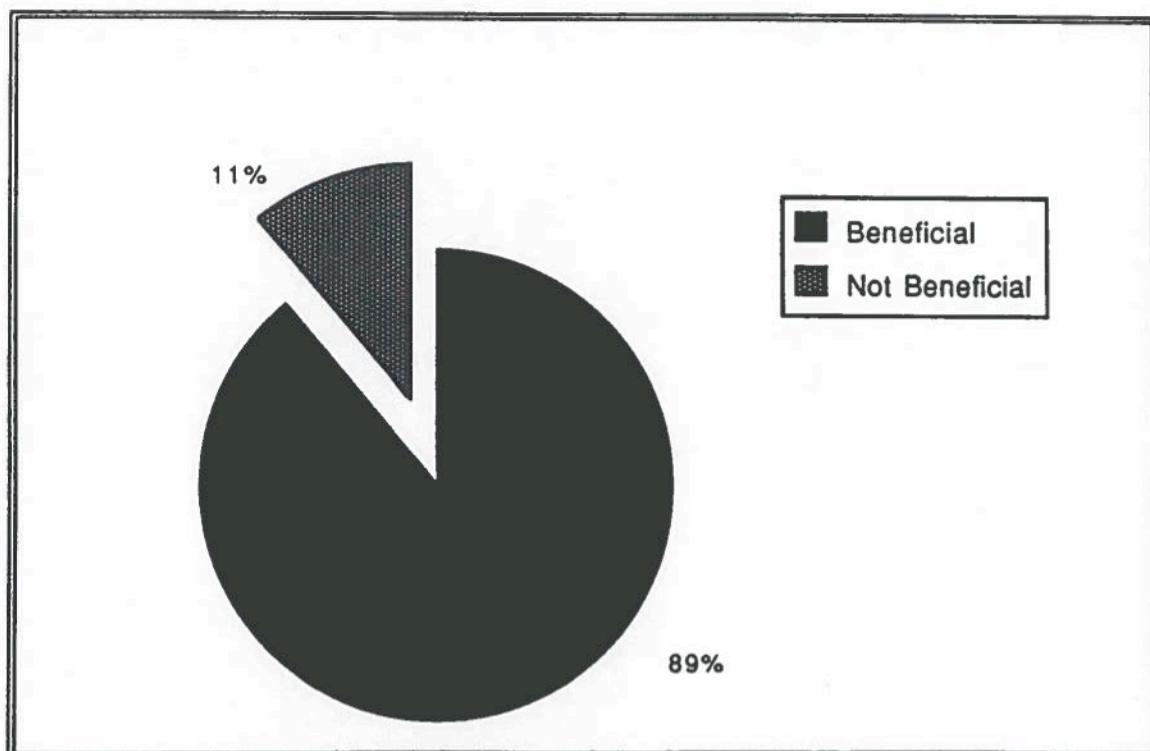


Table 5

Should for-profit childcare receive public support?

This table represents the percentages of presenters arguing for and against public support of for-profit childcare operations.

Note that very few PEI presenters addressed this issue.

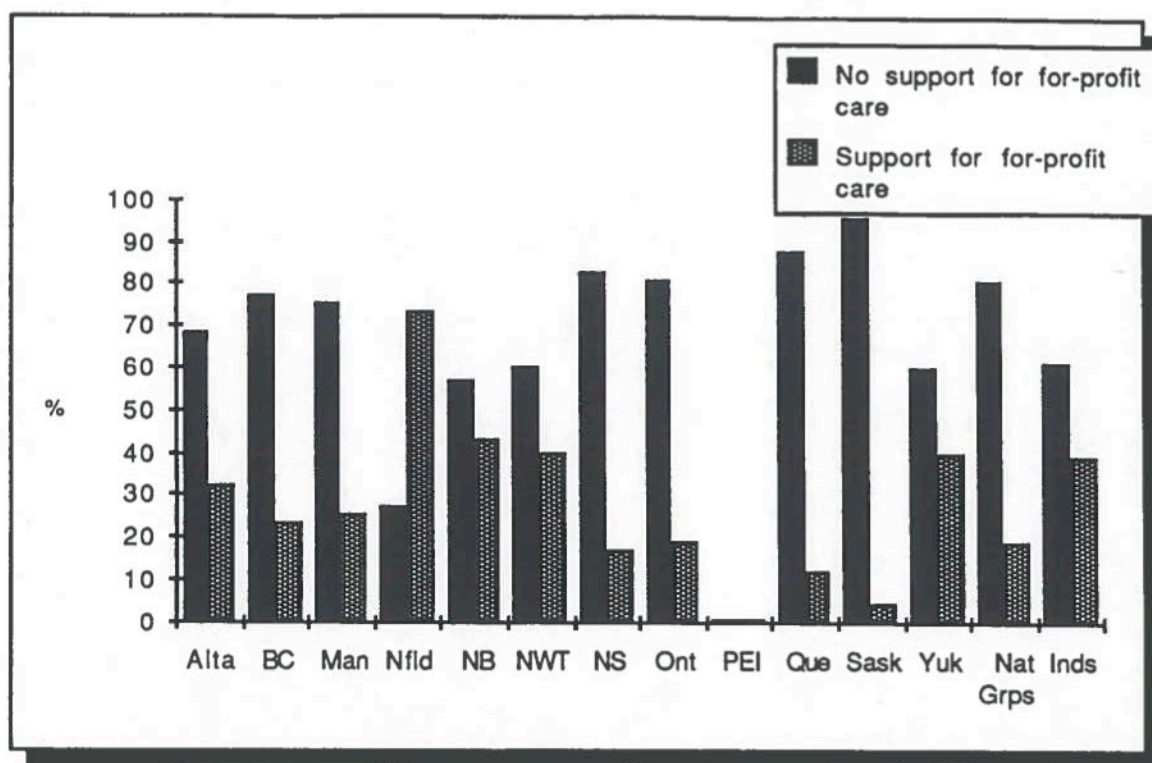
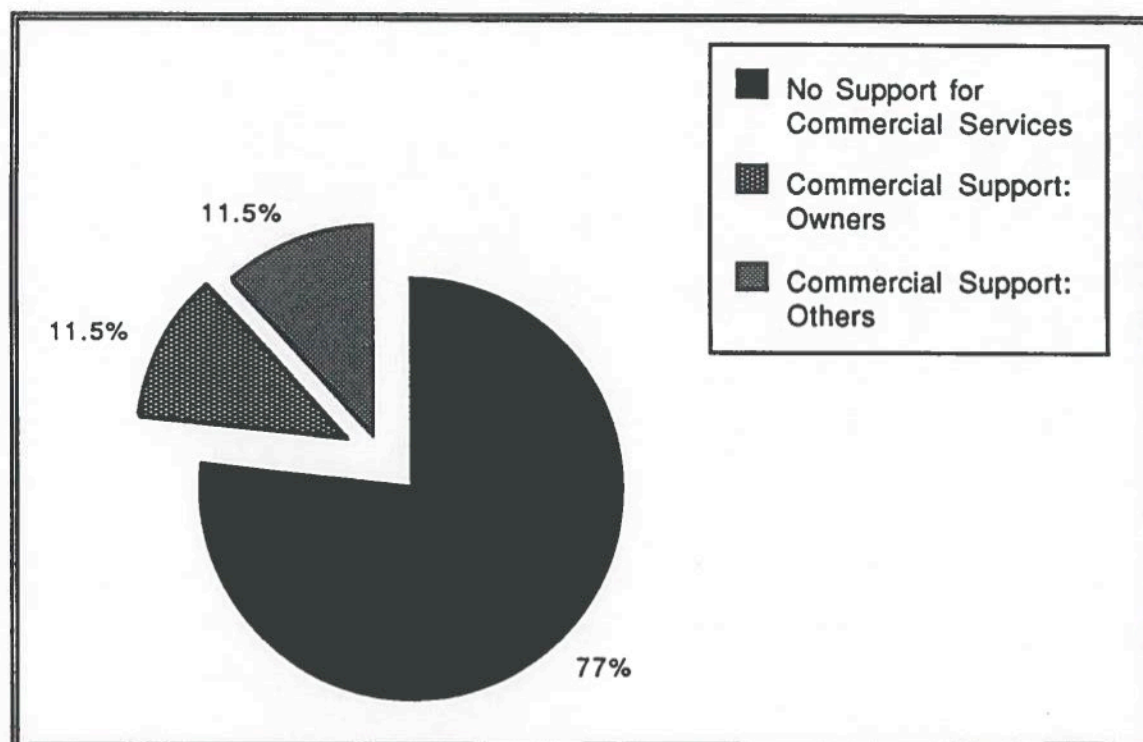


Table 6

Summary: Should for-profit childcare receive public support?

This table represents the 304 respondents (31% of the total presenters) arguing for and against public support of for-profit childcare operations.

50% of those recommending support were owners of profit-making childcare services.



Should childcare be universally accessible?

This table represents the percentages of respondents recommending a childcare system accessible to all families or those recommending a childcare system accessible only to needy families.

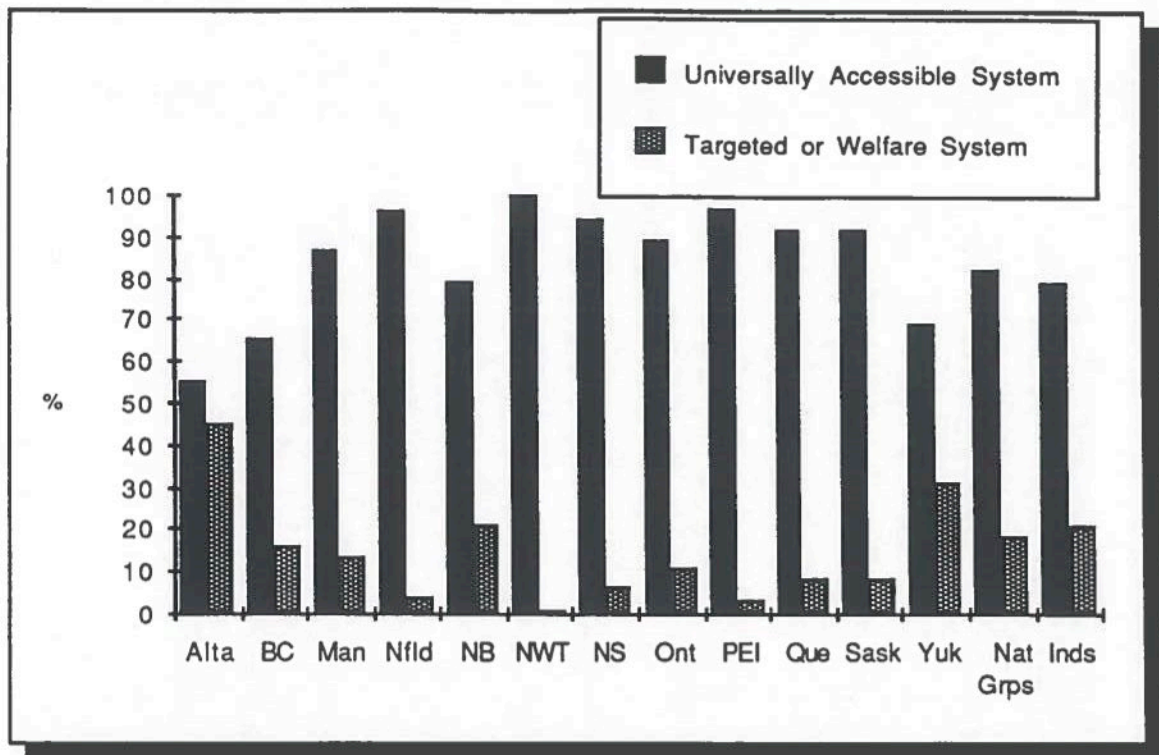


Table 8

Summary: Should childcare be universally accessible?

This table represents the 533 respondents (55% of the total presenters) who recommended a childcare system which would be accessible to all families or those who recommended that support for childcare be limited to needy families.

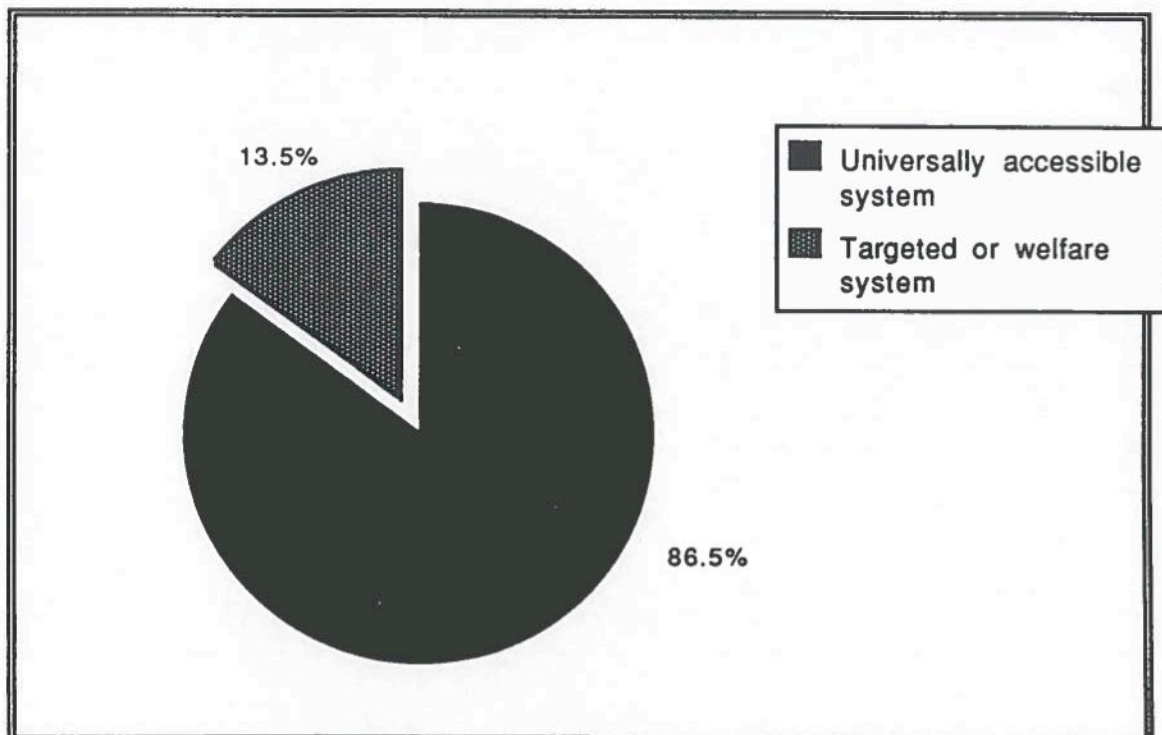


Table 9

Should parents pay for childcare?

This table represents the percentage of respondents recommending that parents pay childcare fees or no fees.
Note that very few Yukon presenters addressed this issue.

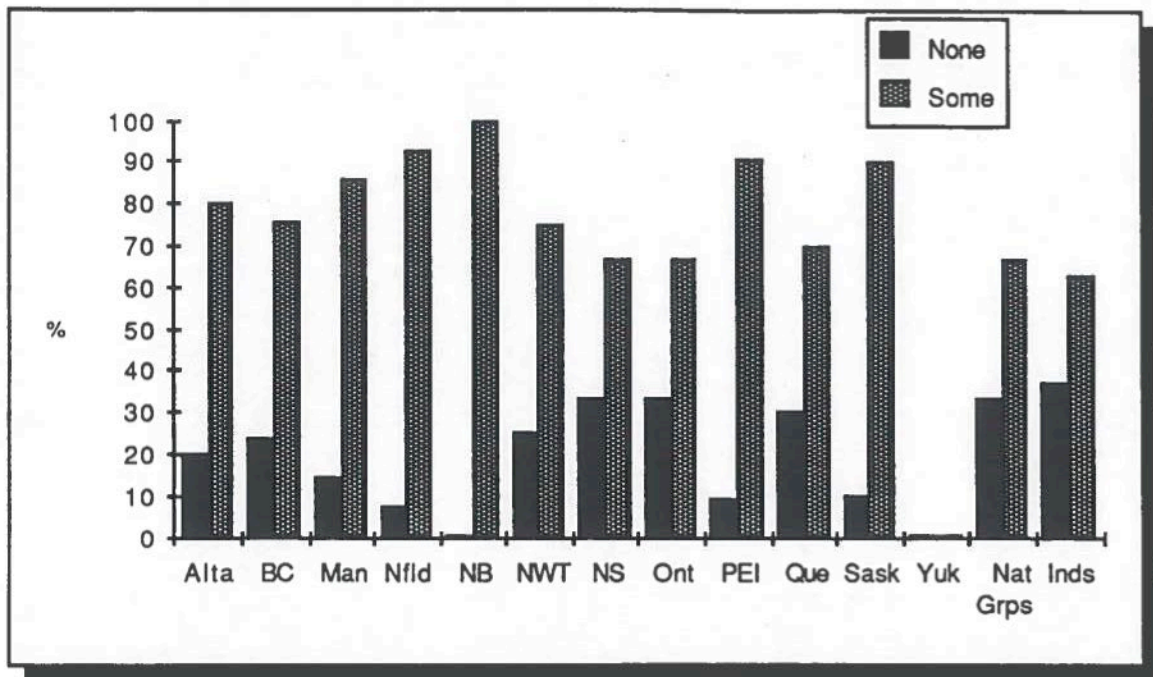


Table 10

Summary: Should parents pay for childcare?

This table represents the 265 respondents (27% of the total presenters) recommending that parents pay no, or some, fees.

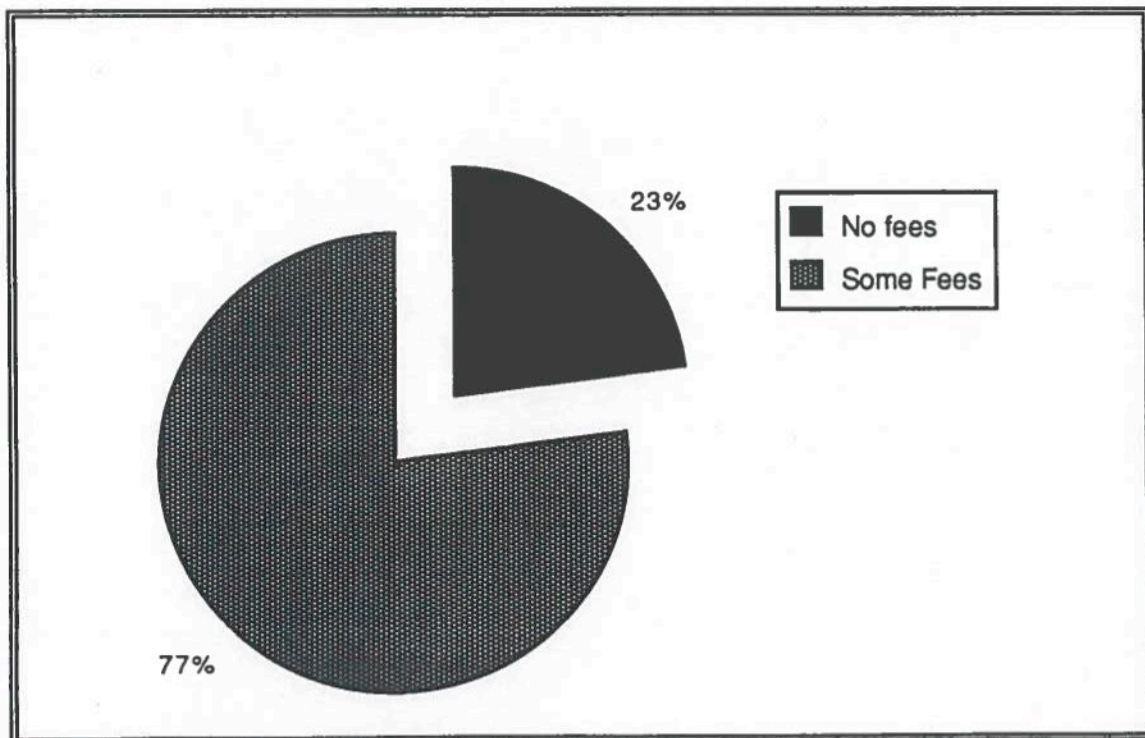


Table 11

Support for a comprehensive childcare system

This table represents the percentages of respondents who called for a comprehensive childcare system (including parental leave and services for stay-at-home parents) versus those who suggested that public funds be used to encourage parents to stay at home.

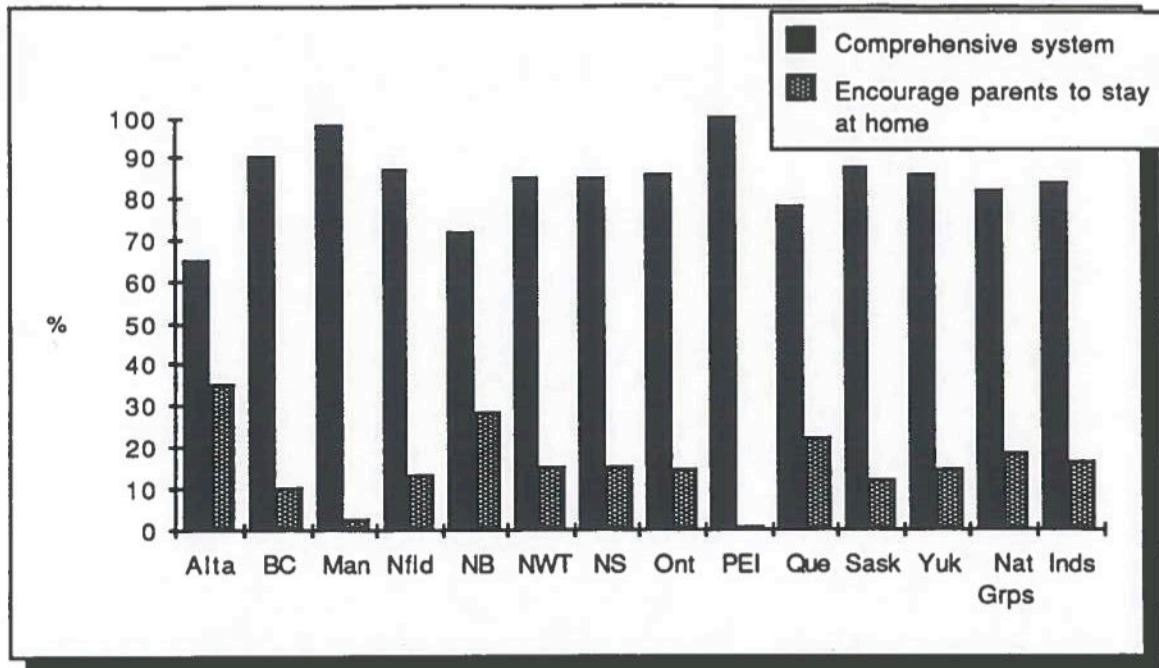


Table 12

Summary: Support for a comprehensive childcare system

This table represents the 642 respondents (66% of the total presenters) calling for a comprehensive childcare system (including parental leave and services for stay-at-home parents) or one that supports stay-at-home parents.

Note that 55 respondents (8.6%) recommended both that a comprehensive childcare system be developed and that women be assisted to stay at home with their children.

They are counted twice in the table.

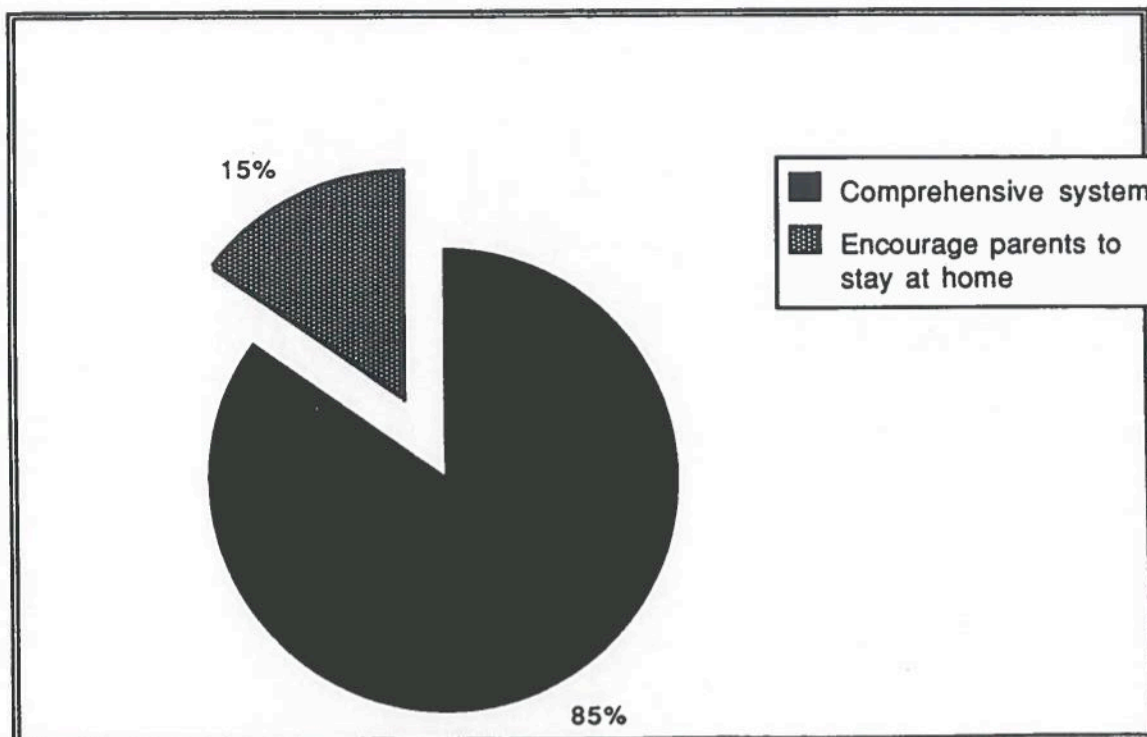


Table 13

Summary: Work-related childcare

This table represents the 96 respondents (10% of the total presenters) who made suggestions about work-related childcare.

Note that because relatively few respondents specifically addressed this issue, only summary figures are presented.

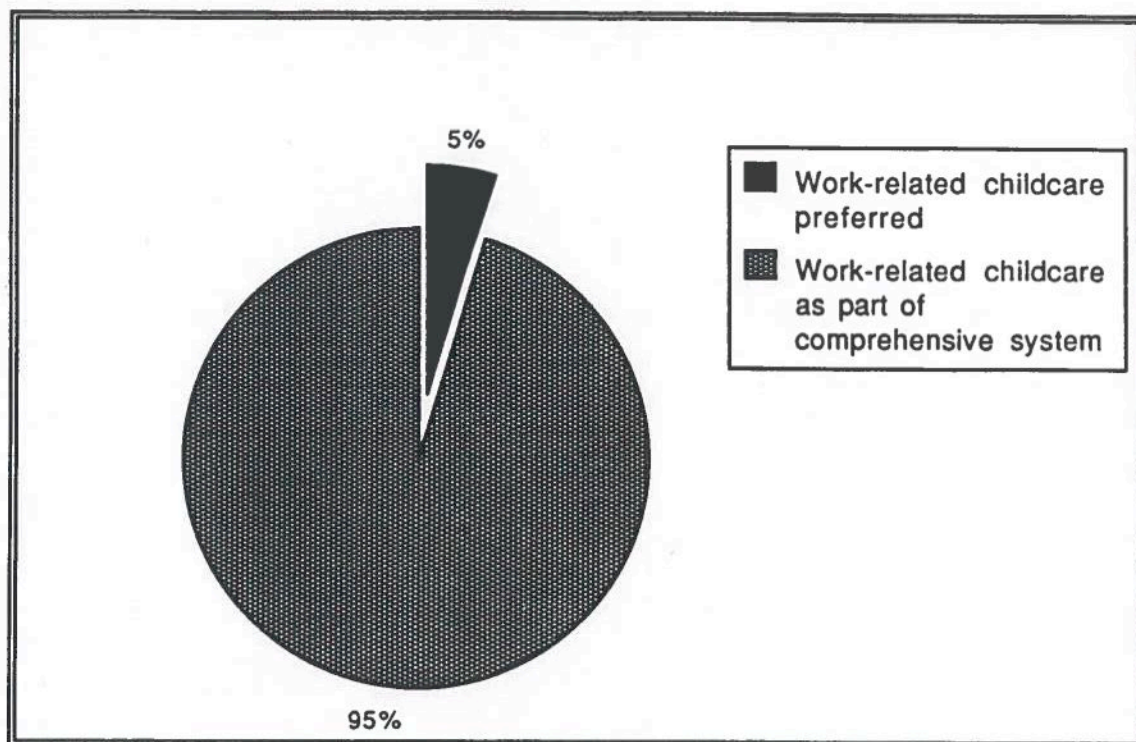


Table 14
Wages of childcare staff

This table represents the percentages of respondents who specifically drew attention to the wages and/or working conditions of childcare staff, arguing that wages are too low or that staff are subsidizing the childcare system.

37% of the total presenters addressed this issue.

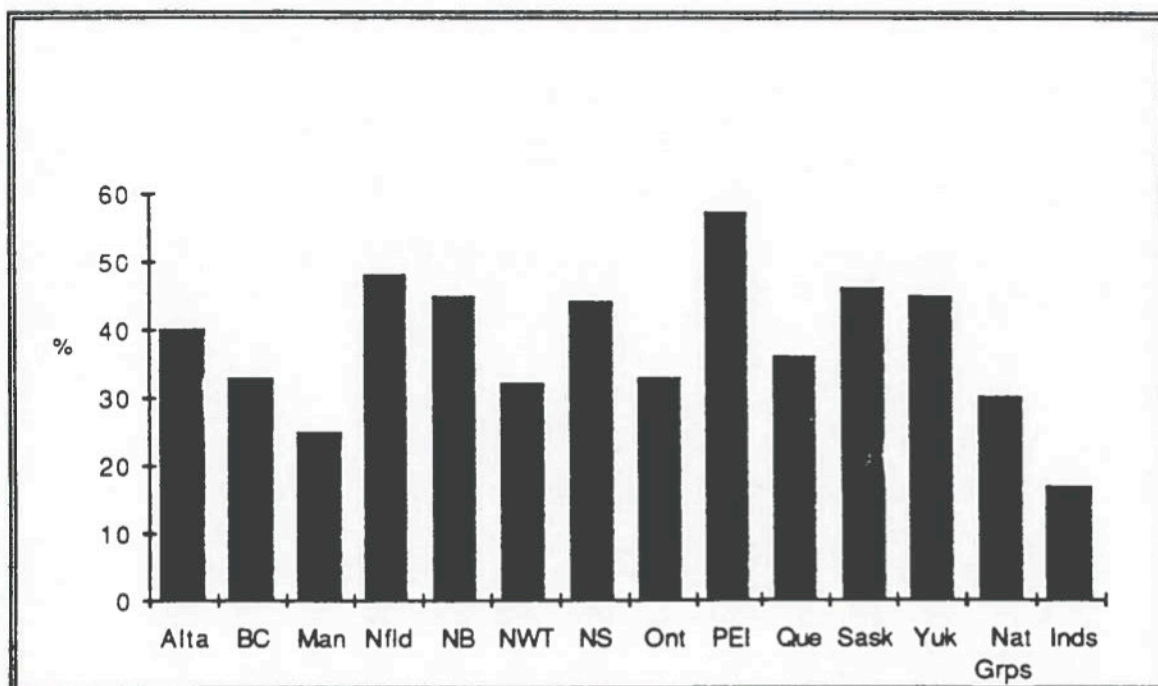


Table 15

Summary of data

This table is a summary of tables 1 to 12 and table 14. It shows the total number of presenters by province and for national groups and individuals, the proportion of respondents for each issue analyzed and the proportion of responses for each side of each issue. Because of the small number of respondents on the issue of work-related child care, no breakdown is provided.

	TOTAL NUMBER OF PRE- SENTERS	1. DELIVERY OF FUNDS		2. EFFECTS OF CHILDCARE		3. FOR-PROFIT CHILDCARE		4. UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY		5. PARENT FEES		6. COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE		CONCERN ABOUT 7. STAFF PROPORTION OF PRESENTERS				
		a) PROPORTION OF PRESENTERS	b) TO SERVICES PARENTS	a) PROPORTION OF PRESENTERS	b) NOT BENE- FICIAL	a) PROPORTION OF PRESENTERS	b) SUP- PORT	a) PROPORTION OF PRESENTERS	b) NO YES	a) PROPORTION OF PRESENTERS	b) SOME NONE	a) PROPORTION OF PRESENTERS	b) AT HOME YES					
Alberta	57	0.49	0.68	0.32	0.20	0.39	0.32	0.68	0.58	0.45	0.55	0.26	0.80	0.20	0.70	0.35	0.65	0.40
B.C.	158	0.41	0.89	0.11	0.38	0.25	0.23	0.77	0.51	0.16	0.65	0.22	0.76	0.24	0.49	0.10	0.90	0.33
Manitoba	71	0.49	0.77	0.23	0.09	0.39	0.25	0.75	0.42	0.13	0.87	0.24	0.86	0.14	0.59	0.02	0.98	0.25
Nfld.	66	0.32	0.76	0.24	0.02	0.24	0.73	0.27	0.42	0.04	0.96	0.42	0.93	0.07	0.92	0.13	0.87	0.48
N.B.	20	0.70	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.35	0.43	0.57	0.45	0.21	0.79	0.15	1.00	0.00	0.90	0.28	0.72	0.45
N.W.T.	25	0.60	0.80	0.20	0.00	0.20	0.40	0.60	0.36	0.00	1.00	0.16	0.75	0.25	0.52	0.15	0.85	0.32
N.S.	50	0.66	0.91	0.09	0.07	0.24	0.17	0.83	0.64	0.06	0.94	0.30	0.67	0.33	0.78	0.15	0.85	0.44
Ontario	338	0.52	0.78	0.22	0.14	0.37	0.19	0.81	0.56	0.11	0.89	0.25	0.67	0.33	0.61	0.14	0.86	0.33
P.E.I.	35	0.46	0.94	0.06	0.04	0.06	-	-	0.83	0.03	0.97	0.31	0.91	0.09	0.94	0.00	1.00	0.57
Québec	74	0.54	0.65	0.35	0.12	0.23	0.12	0.88	0.35	0.08	0.92	0.31	0.70	0.30	0.43	0.22	0.78	0.36
Sask.	59	0.95	0.84	0.16	0.13	0.46	0.04	0.96	0.90	0.08	0.92	0.49	0.90	0.10	0.97	0.12	0.88	0.46
Yukon	22	0.91	0.60	0.40	0.00	0.23	0.40	0.60	0.59	0.31	0.69	0.14	-	-	0.64	0.14	0.86	0.45
Nat/Grps	45	0.86	0.77	0.23	0.21	0.61	0.19	0.81	0.77	0.18	0.82	0.34	0.67	0.33	0.77	0.18	0.82	0.30
Indiv.	188	0.14	0.81	0.19	0.19	0.10	0.39	0.61	0.37	0.21	0.79	0.14	0.63	0.37	0.46	0.16	0.84	0.17
TOTAL	975	0.53	0.78	0.22	0.11	0.31	0.23	0.77	0.55	0.13	0.87	0.27	0.77	0.23	0.66	0.15	0.85	0.37

The preceding tables show that there is a clear direction among the respondents at the Special Committee on seven of the eight issues for which responses were coded. Given the diverse constituencies represented by those who spoke, it seems likely that Canadians are reaching a consensus on at least these seven key childcare issues. The eighth issue -- low wages for childcare staff -- was mentioned by many presenters, indicating an emerging consensus that the issue must be addressed across the country.

1. Delivery of Funds (519 respondents; 562 responses)

Tables 1 and 2 show that nearly 8 out of 10 responses coded recommended that public funding for childcare should be directed to the services, while 22% favoured the option of funding parents through a tax credit or deduction. 43 respondents (8.3% of respondents on this issue) recommended that funding go both to parents and to services. They were counted twice for the purposes of tables 1 and 2, and represent 38% of those recommending funding to parents and 11% of those recommending funding to services. The majority of opinion is reflected in all provinces and territories, except New Brunswick where opinions were evenly divided on this issue.

The majority opinion represents ones of the key beliefs of childcare advocates, who have long put forward the position that direct operational and capital grants to non-profit childcare programs will strengthen existing services and allow for new services to develop to meet the need while reducing costs to parent-users.

2. Effects of Childcare on Children and Families (437 respondents)

Tables 3 and 4 give the presenters' opinions on the effect of childcare on children and families. A clear consensus emerges from the tabulation of the responses on this issue, as nearly 9 out of 10 respondents expressed their belief that childcare outside the family could be a positive experience for children and families. Again, this strong majority opinion holds true for

all provinces and territories, for national groups and for individual respondents.

It is interesting to note that there were relatively few presenters who said that there should be no childcare available outside the family. Some groups recommended government support to mothers who remain out of the labour force to care for their children. An Ontario chapter of R.E.A.L. Women, for example, said that...

"In today's society, we realize that day care is almost unavoidable. For those who have no alternative, child care of the highest quality should be available..." (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care, 25:97).

These presenters were likely to call for targeted, rather than universally accessible solutions or for a mix of childcare services and support for parents at home.

There were notable exceptions to this pattern; that is, there were a number of presenters who said or implied that there should be no childcare outside the family under any circumstances. For example, a Hamilton Ontario church group called upon a literal interpretation of the Bible to support their recommendation that...

"...government should not become involved in child care. We would like to see all government funding of day care discontinued and the present federal day care tax exemptions withdrawn..." (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care, 24:110).

Another group which strongly opposed childcare, the Wyoming Christian Couples Club asked...

"...Who but a child molester will desire to take care of a child and give day care to a child?" (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care, 23:42).

Presenters whose opinions of childcare were as strongly opposed as these were a small minority, however.

3. Funding of For-profit Childcare (304 respondents)

The question of direct public funds to the for-profit childcare sector is one of the key issues in the current debate about childcare. As tables 5 and 6 show, more than three-quarters of respondents argued against public support of for-profit childcare programs. Of the 23% who supported for-profit operations, one-half were owners of profit-making childcare services.

A majority of respondents in all provinces and territories but one held the majority view; Newfoundland was an exception as 72% of respondents in that province favoured public support of for-profit programs. It should be noted that most of Newfoundland's extremely limited supply of daycare is small owner-operated for-profit programs.

4. Universal Versus Targeted Accessibility (533 respondents)

Tables 7 and 8 deal with the issue of universal versus targeted accessibility of childcare services. 86.5% of respondents expressed the opinion that Canada should develop a universally accessible, publicly funded system of childcare services, that these services would be a right of all families and/or available to all families who need them. A minority, a little over one in ten respondents, recommended that childcare services or funding be targeted only to needy families. The majority opinion holds for all provinces and territories, for national groups and for individual respondents.

Many clear and illuminating descriptions of the concept of universally accessible childcare were offered, including one from a Committee member who responded to the following statement...

"...Child care in its many forms does not represent a replacement of traditional parenting responsibilities, nor does it represent an encroachment on the autonomy of the family..."

in this way...

"...I think that is one of the most misunderstood parts of this whole question. We have had groups and individuals who have come before this committee that think that somehow the word "universal" means that every child from zero to five is going to be in an institution somewhere. That is not what everybody is really talking about. What we are trying to do is have programs in place that complement the parenting role, not try to supplant it..." (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care, 24:63).

Another clarifying statement was added by a presenter at the hearings held in Hamilton...

"...Universal means available to all. In some cases there may be a cost component...we can take into consideration the involvement of parents in the choosing of care for their children, whether it be a licensed centre, whether it be through licensed home operators. But I think the bottom line is that we have to endorse the concept of universal access to early childhood education..." (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care, 24:37).

5. Parent Fees (265 respondents)

The issue of parent fees is addressed in tables 9 and 10. 77% of respondents recommended that parents pay some childcare fees, while 23% believed that the service should be entirely publicly funded. Although the table does not indicate what percentage of the costs of providing services to their children parents should pay, previous tables indicated that a clear majority of respondents favoured a universally accessible system of childcare.

Support of parent fees is not inconsistent with support for universal accessibility to childcare services. It simply means that no family would be prevented from using the services because of their inability to pay, and assumes that user fees would be much lower than they are at present. (c.f. tables 1 and 2)

6. Support for a Comprehensive Childcare System (642 respondents; 697 responses)

Tables 11 and 12 show that 85% of responses coded recommended that parents in the labour force and at home have access to a comprehensive range of childcare choices including full- and part-time group programs, regulated family care, programs for school-aged children, parent-child programs, services for special needs children, parent education and parental leave. 15% of responses coded recommended that parents should be encouraged and financially supported to stay at home with young children. 55 respondents (8.6% of respondents on this issue) recommended both the development of a comprehensive range of childcare choices and financial support for stay-at-home parents. They were counted twice for the purpose of tables 11 and 12, and represent 59% of those recommending financial support to stay-at-home parents and 10% of those recommending the development of comprehensive services.

7. Work-related Childcare (96 respondents)

Table 13 shows that a surprisingly small portion (5%) of respondents recommended that work-related childcare be encouraged over and above other day care options. The vast majority of respondents (95%) recommended that this type of care be one of the many options open to parents within a comprehensive childcare system. This issue was discussed by very few presenters.

8. Wages of Childcare Staff (361 respondents)

As indicated in table 14, low wages earned by childcare staff was mentioned by 37% of presenters as an issue that must be addressed.

In summary, clear majority views appear in the analysis of the transcripts of the public hearings. It appears that a majority of respondents across Canada believe that childcare can be beneficial to children and families and that a comprehensive childcare system, offering a range of services (including

parental leave and services for stay-at-home parents and the option of work-related childcare) should be developed in Canada. A majority of respondents favour universal access to services, direct funding going to services, with some parental fees, and believe that funding should be directed to non-profit programs only.

VI DISCUSSION

a. The Respondents

It is obvious that the process of preparing to participate in the Special Committee on Child Care's public hearings created an impetus for many groups and individuals to develop positions on childcare's important policy issues. This seems to have been more likely to be true of national groups; comparison of response rates of the national groups who presented with all other respondents reveals a substantially higher response rate on almost all issues for the national groups.

Reading the testimony also reveals a wide range of individuals and groups from urban and rural communities all across the country who were well-educated about the issue of childcare and who had developed thoughtful, well-informed, thoroughly-researched presentations. Thus, a women's discussion group from a small rural town in Manitoba, the Wednesday Morning Group, described themselves as...

"... women who live in a small Manitoba town or on nearby farms. For the most part, we are married and working at home. We are raising and have raised children. Some of us are small business or farm partners. Some are professionals or run small businesses. Our ages range wide from women in their twenties to women in their eighties." (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care, 51:75)

The Wednesday Morning Group said,

"...we strongly support the Task Force on Child Care's recommendation to move toward universal, high quality childcare. (although) we do not expect every parent to take advantage of

such a system..." (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care, 51:76).

The presenters were extremely well-versed on the implications and context of their proposals, allowing lively and informed discussion with the members of the Special Committee. The Wednesday Morning Group's presentation was not anomalous; many childcare teachers, parents, and other interested individuals made presentations as cogent as that of the Wednesday Morning Group.

There is no doubt that the publication and distribution of the Report of the Task Force on Child Care and its accompanying background papers shortly before the Special Committee's hearings had a substantial impact on the quality and coherence of much of the testimony. Together with policy proposals from advocacy groups, and a growing body of research and other materials, the Cooke report and research have helped to create a public which is well-informed about childcare policy in a new way.

b. Complexity of Issues

Another noteworthy feature of the public transcripts is the rather limited understanding of the complex issues before them which characterized the responses and discussion of some of the decision-makers on the Committee. Thus, they may have been less than receptive to some of the public testimony presented. For example, a representative of a local women's organization in Sydney, Nova Scotia said...

"...Public funds should not be used to create private profit. Privatization in the United States has lead to the growth of day care chains, and the quality of care has not been well served. There is ample evidence also that the working conditions of day-care workers are better in non-profit centre..." (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care, 14:8).

The reply of a Committee member indicated a serious misunderstanding of funding for childcare. He replied...

"...It is a fact that in Canada we do not fund in any way, shape, or form, commercial centres, but we do fund non-profit ones..." (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care 14:12).

In fact, in almost all provinces, commercial childcare programs are eligible for funding arrangements of various kinds, and are essentially excluded from funding opportunities only in three provinces.

Another point about which some of the Committee members had limited understanding was the important question of universality, in relation to affordability, accessibility, and fees to parents. In Metropolitan Toronto, when a childcare group recommended...

"...that quality child care would be available for all children and families who need it and want it"... (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care, 26:114)

a Committee member commented that...

"...Your recommendations are quite different from some of the advocacy groups that have come forward on day care centres, where it is universal access, fully funded by senior levels of government, open to everybody. And you use the word "affordable" which is a very critical word..." (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care, 26:119).

In fact, throughout the hearings, and in written background information, most advocacy, community, labour and women's groups have used the terms "universal" and "accessible or available for all children and families who need it and want it" synonymously.

The Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association defines universally accessible childcare as including parents' fees.

Some presenters, as well, poorly understood the notion of universally accessible childcare, sometimes suggesting that universal accessibility would

mean that parents would have no choices regarding their children's care arrangements.

As this concept of universal accessibility is perhaps the key one in childcare policy in Canada at this time, it is unfortunate that the public's discussion with the Committee was sometimes hampered by unclear understanding on both sides.

c. Differing Views on Purpose of Public Hearings

Some Committee members felt that presenters should be prepared to make recommendations on possible government funding sources for childcare. Most respondents, however, believed they did not have proper resources to analyze government expenditures and were taken aback when they were pressed to do so. For example, one Toronto witness, a parent making a submission on her own behalf, was pressed by the Committee to describe how the federal government would find funds to carry out her proposals.

She said...

"...I feel I am at a disadvantage here. You are asking me where the money is going to come from. I feel you are ignoring the essential need for day care by pushing the point...unless you take the positive attitude that it can be done-and it is important enough that it must be done-then you defeat the purpose..." (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care, 31:172).

Another presenter in the same session, a Toronto family physician, after listening to the Committee's responses to him and to other respondents at the session said...

"...I am surprised by the challenge to the comments made by the people giving presentations. I think we are here to give comments and give constructive ones...We are not here to say

where the money comes from. We are here to give our point of view...I am only pointing out that there is a lot of difficulty with unregulated home-based day care. I thought this was a forum where suggestions could be made to improve things....I think one of the ways to improve things would be to develop a better system for regulating home-based day care...I thought this was a forum to come up with some ideas about what to do..." (Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Child Care, 31:181).

VII CONCLUSION: WHAT THE PUBLIC SAID

This analysis of what the members of the Special Committee on Child Care heard when they went out "first of all to talk to the people" demonstrates that a relatively clear consensus on childcare's main policy issues is emerging in Canada. As the data illustrate, a large majority of the broad range of individuals and groups representing national, local, and special interests who spoke to these issues were in agreement about the directions they recommend to find solutions to Canada's childcare problems.

There is strong support for universally accessible childcare 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 solutions that they propose are a reflection of those suggested by groups and people who have examined childcare in Canada over the past 10 or 15 years. There are, of course, regional variations which may reflect different current approaches to childcare by provincial governments as well as regional variations in social attitudes. Nevertheless, in spite of these differences, there is surprising consistency of opinion across the country about how we

should get on with the job of providing families with adequate supports to help them meet their childcare responsibilities.

The Special Committee on Child Care has been the second group set up by the federal government to study solutions to Canada's childcare problems in less than 3 years. The first, the Task Force on Child Care was established to consider "the federal government's role in the development of a system of quality childcare in Canada", and provided, as the Minister for the Status of Women said at the beginning of the Special Committee's sessions, "the comprehensive analysis and research".

The Special Committee on Child Care went out ... "to talk to the people"... to... "test this analysis and recommendations...and find out what solutions there are".

The analysis has been presented, and the people's recommendations have been made. The next step is the proposal of solutions which will match the analysis and recommendations.

This report has been prepared to aid further understanding of the many complex issues affecting the discussion of childcare, a topic that touches the lives of children, families, and ultimately all of society.

APPENDIX ACODERS

Jane Beach	Susan Colley	Evelyn McKee
Julie Mathien	Lise Corbeil-Vincent	Susan Prentice
Jane Bertrand	Martha Friendly	Laurel Rothman
Barbara Cameron	Barbara Lampert	Lynne Westlake
		Tricia Willis

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Action éducation des femmes
 Anglican Church of Canada
 Canadian Abortion Rights Action League
 Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women
 Canadian Association for Community Living
 Canadian Airline Flight Attendants Association
 Canadian Association of University Teachers
 Canadian Association of Women Executives
 Canadian Child Care Management Association
 Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
 Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association
 Canadian Ethnocultural Council
 Canadian Federation of Labour
 Canadian Jewish Congress
 Canadian Labour Congress
 Canadian Manufacturers' Association
 Canadian Nurses' Association
 Canadian Organization of Small Business
 Canadian Psychiatric Association
 Canadian Teachers' Federation
 Canadian Union of Public Employees
 Citizens for Public Justice
 Communist Party of Canada
 Confederation of Canadian Unions
 Congress of Canadian Women
 Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
 Family Service Canada
 La fédération nationale des femmes canadiennes-françaises
 La Lèche League
 National Action Committee on the Status of Women
 National Association of Women and the Law
 National Council for Women of Canada
 National Council of YMCA's
 Native Women's Association of Canada
 New Democratic Party of Canada
 National Union of Provincial Government Employees
 Public Service Alliance of Canada
 REALWomen of Canada
 Salvation Army
 United Steelworkers of America
 Vanier Institute of the Family
 Women for the Survival of Agriculture
 Women in Science and Engineering