

EMPLOYERS, UNIONS AND CHILD CARE

**Jane
Bertrand**



ONTARIO COALITION
FOR BETTER
CHILD CARE



Preface

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care was founded in 1981 dedicated to a universally accessible, high quality, publicly funded, non-profit system of child care. Our members include all the major stakeholders in child care in the province, including child care programs and agencies, professional organisations, women's, teachers', unions, faith and community organisations.

Employers, Unions and Child Care is one of a series of four publications intended to consider child care within the context of the 1990s. Other publications will include: **Arguments for Child Care**, **A National Child Care Policy**, and **Child Care and Education**.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care intends to use **Employers, Unions and Child Care** and its companion publications for public education purposes.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper considers how employers and unions can support the development of public policy for a comprehensive child care system, including both family support benefits, early child care and education services.

Comprehensive Child Care System

Early Child Care
and Education Services

Family Support
Benefits

The first section of the paper identifies reason why employers and unions should be involved in child care and looks at changes in Canadian society which have created the urgent need for a child care system. The arguments for public involvement are presented next. The paper also examines the involvement of workers and employers in the creation of other social policies, including pension plans, public education, medical insurance and unemployment insurance.

In the second section, the paper reviews current child care policies, including work-related child care options and related benefits now available in a few workplaces. The paper argues that there are limitations to individual initiatives not guaranteed by public policy, funding or statute.

The final section of the paper presents a vision of comprehensive child care services and benefits and suggests how employers and unions can advocate for such a system in Canada.

The paper concludes that employers and employees must support child care services and benefits which are necessary for parents to participate in the paid workforce and rear healthy, competent children. While important, individual workplace solutions are hard to find and difficult to maintain. Now, is time to bring forward public policy to provide a comprehensive child care system that nurtures healthy child development and accommodates parental workforce participation. Employers and unions can advocate that governments ensure comprehensive child care services become available to all families.

I. WHY SHOULD EMPLOYERS AND UNIONS BE INVOLVED?

CHALLENGES AND CHANGES TO WORK AND FAMILY

Canadian workers and their employers are facing enormous change.

- Women with young children continue to increase their participation in the workforce.

According to labour force predictions, this trend will continue into the next century. Two-thirds of all new entrants into the labour force between 1988 and 2000 will be women (Premier's Council Report, 1990).

The largest increase in the rate of labour force participation has occurred among women with preschool-age children. Between 1976 and 1991, the participation rate of women with a youngest child aged 3 to 5 increased from 41 per cent to 68 per cent. The increase was even more dramatic among women with infants and toddlers: the rate for women with a youngest child under 3 years of age nearly doubled, from 32 to 62 per cent over the same 15 year period (Statistics Canada, 1992).

- Family structures continue to change rapidly.

Women's increased paid labour force participation has dramatically reshaped the structure of two parent families. In 1961, 65 per cent of all Canadian families consisted of a single male wage earner and an at-home spouse. In 1991, this formally typical traditional breadwinner family model accounts for only 12 per cent of Canadian families (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1991).

Lone parent families and blended families have increased (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1991).

More than 70 per cent of Canadian children are in alternative care arrangements on a regular basis while parents work or attend school (Lero et al, 1992).

- The workforce is aging.

Canada is more acutely affected by the baby boom phenomena than the United States. The American baby boom was shorter, starting a year earlier in 1946 but

ended by 1964. Canada's average family size during the "boom" years, 1947 - 1966, peaked at 4 children while American counterparts stopped at 3.5 children (Foot, 1990).

- Too many Canadians have low literacy skills.

Estimates by the Economic Council of Canada (1992) indicate that more than 20 per cent of adults between 25 and 34 and 28 per cent of those between 16 and 24 were below reading levels required to comprehend a newspaper. If this trend continues another one million people who are not literate will enter the labour force over the next 10 years.

Employers and unions, recognizing the work/family dynamic and the need for a well educated workforce, are beginning to seek out ways to respond. Both long term and short term issues reflect their interest:

- Long term issues:
 - Employers project future labour needs for a skilled, competent workforce that can adapt to changing societal and economic demands.
 - Unions promote long-term societal changes that benefit working people.
- Short term issues:
 - Employers address immediate needs to improve productivity, reduce turnover, improve staff morale, reduce absenteeism and develop positive public relations.
 - Unions respond to the immediate work-related needs of their memberships.

Public investment in a child care system and related benefits will address the long term issues. Specific employer and union initiatives address short term issues.

The next section will explore the arguments for both supporting the development of a national system of child care and taking immediate, individual steps to respond to immediate issues while supporting the goal of a comprehensive child care system.

ARGUMENTS FOR INVESTING IN CHILD CARE

Current Canadian labour market demands require a comprehensive child care system. The arguments for public investment in child care include support for healthy child development, addressing poverty, employment equity and improvement of working conditions.

Supporting Healthy Child Development

Research from the past two decades makes it clear that high quality child care services support healthy development while poor quality child care arrangements harm children. The research also indicates that the positive effects of high quality child care or conversely, the negative effects of poor child care may have a long term impact on children's development (Friendly et al, 1991).

Education is a cumulative process which begins in infancy and carries on through the early years, school years and into adulthood. Language acquisition, social competence and cognitive autonomy begin to emerge around two years of age. These skills are the foundation for later learning and can predict school success.

A review of the literature related to the quality of child care found that

when children from child care programs which have a high rating on a global scale of quality are compared with children from programs with a lower rating, the former children are found to have: greater social competency; higher levels of language development; higher developmental levels of play; better ability to self-regulate; greater compliance with adult requests; and few behaviour problems in grade school according to teacher perception.

(Doherty, 1991, p.i.)

In the United States, a national child care staffing study found that high staff turnover rates and often low quality care in many settings jeopardize the development of young children. It reported that children attending centres with low quality care and high staff turnover were less competent in language and social development (Whitebook et al, 1990).

Recent studies suggest that a child's home environment may not be able to compensate for poor quality child care arrangements. Regardless of family or socioeconomic characteristics, children who are cared for in poor quality child care settings (centre or home-based) seem more likely to demonstrate negative social interactions with peers and adults, language delays and poorer academic performance than children attending high quality child care programs (Doherty, 1992).

In France all children have access to public preschool programs offered through the school system for ages 3-5 years. Full-day preschools and widely available after-school programs provide a continuous day of care and education for young children. National census data demonstrates that children from all socioeconomic groups are more likely to pass first grade if they have attended a preschool program (Richardson & Marx, 1989).

The impact of the quality of child care on children's development has important implications. The early experiences of a young child are significant in shaping later life. The social skills and cognitive abilities necessary in future school settings and workplaces begin developing in early childhood. Research demonstrates that the quality of a child's early care and education is an important part of that child's early experiences.

Indicators of Quality in Early Childhood Care and Education Settings

Research has identified specific indicators of quality that encourage optimal development:

- Staff trained in early childhood education in a post-secondary education institution
- High staff/child ratios
- Low staff turnover
- Small group size
- Non-profit sponsorship
- Good salaries and working conditions
- High standards or regulations

(Friendly, 1991; Doherty, 1990)

Informal Child Care Arrangements

Child care services have expanded over the past decade, but have not kept pace with increased maternal labour participation. The result is many more children are now being cared for in informal, unsupervised situations than they were fifteen years ago. Some unregulated situations provide a reasonable quality of care to young children but research indicates that many do not. Some families actually prefer informal child care arrangements but many choose this option because it is cheaper and more likely to be available than regulated child care services.

Many young children still spend their preschool years in unregulated care of unknown quality. As many as 25 per cent of school age children (6 - 12) are left on their own after school hours (Lero, 1993). Parents often have few real alternatives.

Work/Family Tension

There is little research that considers the effects on children of parental stress due to high levels of work/family tension. An understanding of basic child development principles and common sense would suggest a number of consequences. These include: children being constantly rushed; lack of relaxed time with either or both parents; a confusing sequence of care arrange-

ments which may interfere with patterns of attachments to adults and children; school or child care attendance while ill and disturbances in parent-child relationships (Lero & Kyle, 1989). For many children, these likely consequences will affect social, emotional and cognitive development.

Care and Education Together

Canadian workplaces need competent and skilled employees and employers who are adaptable to change. Such a workforce in the future starts with an investment in high quality, early childhood education that promotes language development, social skills and cognitive abilities. At the same time working parents need high quality child care options to support their child-rearing responsibilities while they participate in the labour force. Good child care and good early child education happen together and can benefit all children

Addressing Poverty

Poverty, an acknowledged contributor to poor academic performance and poor health, is a daily reality for nearly a quarter of all Canadian children.

Early child care and education services can reduce the impact of poverty for children living in low income families in two ways. They can:

- promote social, emotional and cognitive development of young children which enhances school performance, and
- assist mothers in low income two parent and lone parent families to participate in the paid labour force or pursue educational or training opportunities that will lead to future employment.

Poverty and Early Childhood Care and Education

A number of studies have concluded that participation in quality early childhood education programs benefits children living in poverty:

- High quality early child care and education programs can help alleviate the effects of poverty including poor school performance and early high school drop out (Cameron, 1986; MacKillop & Clark, 1989; Lazar & Darlington, 1982).
- One recent American study of over 4,500 children concluded that the longer a disadvantaged child attends an early childhood education service before entering grade one, the better his or her chances are of starting school at par with children not considered to be at risk (Gullo, 1990).

- A recent review of the literature suggests that good early child care and education prevent

the decline of intellectual functioning which typically occurs around age two in culturally deprived children. The stimulation of the preschool program helps the child in the task of switching from concrete to abstract reasoning and prepares the child to cope with demands of the school setting.

(Doherty, p.12, 1991)

- The Ontario Child Health Study recommended expanding quality child care programs for children, particularly poor children, to prevent behavioral problems and poor school performance. The study indicates that these children will benefit from such programs regardless of parental employment status (Offord, et al, 1989).
- The Ontario Premier's Council Report on the Economy recommend increased early childhood education initiatives to improve the health and development of all children and to reduce the impact of poverty on school learning (1990).

Unfortunately, low income families often do not have access to high quality child care services:

- Research shows that children from families experiencing economic hardships are more likely to be found in lower quality child care programs (Hayes, Palmer & Masloe, 1990; Pence & Goelman, 1987). Ironically these are the same children who would gain the most by attending high quality early childhood care and education programs.
- Unequal Futures, a report on child poverty in Canada, notes significant differences in child care spending between advantaged and affluent families and poor and vulnerable families. Lower income families spend considerably less. In part this may be explained by child care subsidies that are available to low income families but also indicates that lower income families have fewer child care options (Kitchen, B., et al, 1991).

While there is considerable documentation that quality early child care and education programs do reduce the devastating effects of poverty on young children, there are limitations to isolating this as an anti-poverty strategy.

A review of the primary prevention research in Canada and the United States suggests that universal accessibility is important to avoid stigmatizing a target population. A broader population is also likely to enhance the overall effectiveness of programs intended to address disadvantaged, "at risk" children (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1989).

Edward Zigler, the founder of the American Head Start program for disadvantaged pre-school children states:

The problems of many families will not be solved by early intervention efforts, but only by changes in the basic features of the infrastructure of our society. No amount of counselling, early childhood curricula, or home visits will take the place of jobs that provide decent incomes, affordable housing, appropriate health care, optimal family configurations, or integrated neighbourhoods where children encounter positive role models.

(Zigler, 1990, p. xiii)

Employment Opportunities and Child Care

Child care does address poverty by contributing to structural solutions for Canadian families. The provision of quality, regulated child care options is an essential component of reducing poverty and improving employment (and therefore, economic) circumstances for poor families.

An extensive review of training and education programs for social assistance recipients in Ontario found that regulated child care services were an essential support service. The report indicates that the provision of support allowances for child care is not enough; there must be available child care spaces (Perrin, 1987).

The Transitions Report (1988), an extensive review of social benefits legislation in Ontario, cites lack of child care as a major barrier to social service recipients re-entry into the workforce.

The Ontario Coalition For Better Child Care report on Child Care and Economic Renewal illustrates a number of startling examples showing the link between continued poverty and lack of child care services.

Child Care and Economic Renewal

- Two-thirds of the 120,000 people in Metro Toronto who use food banks every month are on social assistance. A survey of food bank users, compiled by the Daily Bread Food Bank found that 22 per cent of respondents identified child care responsibilities as the reason they were not working.
- A survey of child care users in Grey-Owen Sound found that 58 per cent would be forced onto welfare if the county council followed through on its threat to shut down the region's day care services.

- For many workers in Toronto's once-strong garment industry, piece-working at home means wages well below the minimum, long hours and no vacations or benefits. A study by the Ontario District Council of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union found that the single most important reason that women work as homeworkers in the garment industry is the lack of child care.
- Child care is essential to ensure the stability of rural communities. The Algoma Child Care Plan for the 1990s found that 25 per cent of the rural women interviewed work in the paid labour force. Their income is often essential to maintaining their family farms. The study also found that 20 per cent of rural women are not working because they cannot find reliable babysitters for their children.
- Jessie's Centre for Teenagers, serving teenage mothers in Metro Toronto reports that a number of clients who were ready to return to school in September 1991 but were unable to because no subsidies were available, forcing them to remain on social assistance a year longer before completing their education.

(Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, 1991)

Parents, who would prefer to seek employment or training opportunities but remain on social assistance benefits because child care options are unavailable, continue to be trapped in the poverty cycle. The provision of stable, quality child care services removes one of the barriers facing many poor families. Government programs, including employment and training programs, will be ineffective without a quality, regulated child care system.

Employment Equity

Employment equity is an urgent but elusive goal for Canadian workers and employers. For many Canadians, the lack of available, affordable child care is a barrier to full participation in the labour force. Women have increased their participation in the paid labour force, and made dramatic gains in social, educational and political arenas over the past quarter century. However, mothers still are primarily responsible for child rearing and child care. Mothers are frequently prevented from accessing schooling, job training or gainful employment, career advancement and opportunities for increased income because child care is unavailable or is not affordable.

The Commission on Equality in Employment, established by the federal government and headed by Rosalie Abella, investigated the most effective ways of promoting equality of employment for women, native people, people with disabilities and visible minorities. The final report, *Equality in Employment* (1984), identified the lack of effective child care systems as a significant barrier to equality in the workforce.

Children continue to be regarded as women's work and child-rearing responsibilities are not shared equally between fathers and mothers in Canadian families. Time budget studies indi-

cate that women with children in two parent families who are employed full time outside of the home spend an average of 28 hours per week on house work. Fathers in these families contribute about eight hours per week to domestic labour (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1978).

This figure has not changed appreciably in the last decade. A more recent study found that women still average 2.1 hours a day on child care while working fathers spend 1.6 hours (Statistics Canada, 1992).

This unequal sharing of responsibility leads to considerable stress as women try to balance work and family duties. A survey of Canadian federal public sector employees, found that mothers experience significantly greater work-family conflict than fathers. Thirty-two per cent of mothers in dual income families reported high work-family conflict, compared with 23 per cent of dual earner fathers, and only nine per cent of fathers in families where the mother was a full time homemaker (Duxbury, L. et al, 1991).

Women's inequity in the workplace as reflected in wages and job status is directly related to their disproportionate share of child care and housekeeping responsibilities. Women choose occupations that allow them to continue to take responsibility for raising children. Inadequate child care options reinforce this pattern and the accompanying discrimination in the workplace.

Many women choose to work part-time instead of full-time. In 1988, approximately one-third of women with preschool children and living with a spouse were employed part-time, while less than one-fifth of lone mothers were employed part-time (Statistics Canada, 1990). A Statistics Canada study found 142,000 women working part-time or on limited hour schedules due to a lack of affordable, available child care in 1987 (Akyeampong, 1988).

In another study, nearly 25 per cent of women working part time cited family responsibilities as their reason for working fewer hours (Statistics Canada, in preparation).

Other mothers decide to leave the labour force in order to care for their children. Statistics Canada in 1987 found 21,000 women who had left the labour force and were not working because of child care arrangements (Akyeampong, 1988). An American review found that child care was a major obstacle for mothers entering and remaining in the paid labour force (Edelman, 1989). Another American study reported that a lack of child care significantly reduced the labour participation of a group of nurses, who were predominantly women (Lehrer, Santero & Mohan-Neill, 1991).

The 1988 National Child Care Survey shows similar findings, indicating that large numbers of women left their jobs, turned down job offers, reduced their work hours or felt their job performance was reduced because of problems with child care.

Women will not achieve wages and labour force status equal to men as long as they remain primarily responsible for child care. High quality, available, flexible and affordable child care services are essential to allow women to participate in the labour force to the full extent of their abilities and desires.

Improving Working Conditions

Over the last decade research has considered the effects of work on family life and the effects of family life on work in response to increased participation of women in the paid labour force and the increase in dual income earner families. There is agreement that current workplace practices coupled with family responsibilities create a work/family strain that has serious consequences for a significant number of workers (Lero & Kyle, 1989).

- In a 1989 Conference Board of Canada survey 80 per cent of the respondents reported that stress from the competing demands of work and family affected absenteeism, productivity and promotion, training and transfer decisions.
- A study of absenteeism in the work place conducted by Statistics Canada showed that absenteeism from work for personal or family reasons doubled from 1977 to 1987 (Akyeampong, 1988).
- A study of work/family fit of employees at three Canadian corporations found a strong relationship between work/family fit and absenteeism. People with low work/family fit had a significantly higher rate of absenteeism (Frankel, 1988).
- Two American family policy experts suggest that employers believe that child illness is one of the main reasons for absenteeism (Kamerman and Kahn, 1987).
- An American study of economic issues and child care suggests that a lack of child care is a predictor of job absenteeism (Edelman, 1989).
- American surveys suggest that employers who invest in child care services or family support benefits do so to address problems of recruitment, retention, absenteeism, productivity, staff morale and public relations (Galinsky, 1988).

Employers and unions are recognizing the need to help workers balance work and family responsibilities. Working conditions that recognize family responsibilities contribute to both improved productivity and increased job satisfaction. Employers and unions can work within the context of existing public policy on child care services and family benefits that address immediate needs. While work-related child care initiatives will not compensate for or replace needed public policy and funding changes they are essential first steps in bringing about the changes necessary to build a comprehensive child care system.

The following history examines a number of employer and/or union sponsored initiatives that have made a difference to individual workplaces and contributed to changes in social public policy.

HISTORY OF EMPLOYER/UNION INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL POLICY INITIATIVES

Employers and unions have been involved in the development of social public policy areas including public education, unemployment insurance, medicare and pension plans.

In part, public education developed in Canada in response to labour market needs for a workforce that was educated and literate. The economy during the nineteenth century was evolving from an agricultural base to a resource and industrial base.

- In Hawksbury, Prescott County (located in eastern Ontario) the local sawmill owners, Hamilton Brothers Company, built the first school in the town for the community adjacent to the mill during the 1850s. It continued to operate schools on a semi-private basis until 1886 when the Hawksbury School Board assumed responsibility for school operations. The Hamilton Brothers Company supported schooling as a right for all children and advocated for a public system (Parr, 1982).

Health care, pension plans, and workers' compensation are issues that were raised by trade unions as part of contract negotiations before they became public policy. The unions advocated for public policy initiatives that would establish social programs for all workers, not just those organized in unions who had negotiated benefits as part of the collective bargaining process.

- In 1905, the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada called for a system of public pensions at their annual convention (Guest, 1980). Once public pension plans were established Canadian unions maintained a critical watch over the implementation and operation (Bartlett, 1980).
- In Quebec, the provincial government established a Commission on Labour Accidents in 1907. Trade union representatives called for a compulsory insurance system and the Quebec branch of the Canadian Manufacturer's Association supported the principle of the worker's right to compensation unless negligence could be determined (Guest, 1980).

The first national unemployment insurance program was introduced in Canada in 1940. Both business and union leaders had identified the need for a public unemployment insurance program to support the economic system of Canada (Wharf, 1980).

- In 1919 the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations was established to enquire into widespread labour unrest across the country. After travelling from coast to coast and hearing submissions from interested persons and organizations including trade union and business groups, the Commission recommended a national program for unemployment insurance (Smith, 1985, & Guest, 1980).
- Subsequent high unemployment rates during the Depression years and vocal demands from unemployed Canadians, trade unions, farmer's co-operatives and church groups helped to bring in public policy and legislation for an unemployment insurance program (Guest, 1980 & Bartlett, 1980).
- A number of groups representing business groups including the Retail Merchants Association, the Ontario Association of Real Estate Boards, and the Canadian Manufacturing Association supported the introduction of a mandated contributory unemployment insurance plan. These business people saw the insurance program as a way of increasing consumer purchasing power when the economy was in recession and unemployment rates rose (Finkel, 1977).

Employers and unions are powerful agents of change in Canadian society. Economic pressure and self-interest are two motivating forces, but so is the vision of a better, more just society. These are not separable goals and will continue to push employers and unions to participate in Canada's evolving social policy.

II. CHILD CARE OPTIONS: 1993

CURRENT NATIONAL CHILD CARE POLICY

Canada has no national child care policy and there is essentially no child care system in this country. Child care services are discretionary programs which primarily rely on user or parent fees. The federal government helps to subsidize child care costs for low income families and provides tax breaks for higher income families (Friendly, Rothman and Oloman, 1991). In the spring of 1992, the federal government stated that it will not pursue a national child care program.

In Canada, child care is under provincial or territorial jurisdiction. Regulated child care services are licensed and monitored by provincial/territorial governments.

Canada Assistance Plan

The Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) is welfare legislation that enables the federal government to cost-share welfare programs which are under provincial or territorial jurisdiction. Under CAP, child care subsidies for families in need or likely to be in need, can be funded by the federal government. Until 1990, CAP provided 50 per cent of the cost of eligible child care subsidies to provincial/territorial governments. Now, these transfer payments have been limited to a maximum five per cent increase in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. These limits have restricted provincial child care initiatives and raise serious questions about the future of CAP funding.

Child Care Deduction

The child care expense deduction allows parents to deduct child care fees (maximum \$5,000 per preschool child) from their taxable income, for either regulated or informal services, provided a receipt is issued. The value of this income tax deduction increases with income level so parents with higher incomes receive greater compensation.

Maternity/Parental Leave

Maternity and parental leaves and benefits are mandated by provincial and federal statute. They are benefits that are available to all employees through legislation, not subject to the discretion of employers.

In Canada, employees are now entitled to 10 weeks of maternity leave benefits, followed by 15 weeks parental leave benefits available to either parent through the Unemployment Insurance Act. In 1993 maternity and parental leave benefits are paid at 57 per cent of wages up to a weekly maximum of \$425. Employers may provide additional maternity/paternity benefits, including additional paid or unpaid leave or topped up UIC payments.

The maternity and parental leave payments are federal benefits but the provisions which allow parents to use them, fall under provincial or territorial jurisdictions. Most provinces and the territories have revised their labour legislation so parents can use the increased federal benefits.

EMPLOYER AND/OR UNION SPONSORED CHILD CARE INITIATIVES

Work-Related Child Care Services

Work-related child care can be defined as:

a program established by and/or having some on-going involvement with a sponsoring employer or employee group for the purpose of the child care needs of parents in the employ of the sponsor.

(Cooke, et al, 1986, p.65)

In Canada, a few employers, employee groups and unions have responded to the urgent need for child care by supporting work-related child care services. The most visible example is a child care centre located on the worksite. Work-related child care services are intended to meet the child care needs of employees in a particular field of work or particular work place, and are provided at or nearby the work site. The employer and/or employee group has some involvement with the on-going operation of work-related child care services. This involvement can include financial assistance, management assistance, supervision, provision of physical space, facilities maintenance, administrative services, and food services.

Workplace Child Care Centres

Work-place child care centres may be:

- On-site or near-site: Child care centres, established at the work site, or nearby, for employees.
- Off-site: Child care centres located off the actual work site in a community building such as a local school, church or community centre.

- A consortium model: Child care centres supported by two or more employers. This type of arrangement is most favourable in large urban centres where hospitals may be located close to each other and want to share financial costs.

Workplace child care programs must operate within the licensing requirements of a particular province or territory. The site of the centre is a major factor in determining age groups the centre will serve and numbers of children within each group.

Management structures for workplace child care centres include non-profit incorporation, direct operation by the workplace or operation by an outside agency or institution. Child care centres owned and operated as commercial operations are not common in workplace settings. Employer/employee groups are unwilling to subsidize private operators.

Over the past two decades the number of workplace child care centres has increased to meet the demands for child care spaces, particularly the numbers of infant and toddler spaces have increased to meet the demands for child care.

History of Workplace Child Care Centres

Workplace child care in Canada is not a new idea. It was first introduced in the 1830s by factory owners in Halifax who wanted to attract women and older children by providing on-site schools, called infant schools, for very young children. The infant schools established in Canada were modeled on similar schools established in Scotland by Robert Owen, a factory owner who wanted to increase the number of workers available in the local community to work in his factory. Owen also had a strong commitment to the education of young children. The infant schools developed in Scotland, England and North America during the first half of the nineteenth century were early child care and education programs intended to support the education and development of the child while providing supplemental care while parents worked (Pence, 1990).

Changing social and economic circumstances and women's need to work outside the home during the late nineteenth century instigated day care centres often called creches. These programs often were a unique form of work-related child care. Young women who found themselves alone with a child to support in urban settings often used these services usually provided by volunteer women's organizations. The creches were also employment agencies for the young mothers who would provide domestic services often for the same women who were members of the organizations providing child care (Schulz, 1978).

In 1943, the federal government introduced emergency legislation to establish child care centres for children of working women. This program was targeted primarily at women working in war-related industries (Schulz, 1978).

Riverdale Hospital in Toronto is recognized as the first workplace child care centre initiated since the end of the World War II federal-provincial cost-sharing program. The hospital began an on-site child care centre in 1964 in order to attract nursing staff (Mayfield, 1990).

In 1971, the British Columbia Government Employees Union initiated the first child care centre sponsored and funded by a union.

There are now an estimated 176 workplace child care centres in Canada (Beach et al, in press). This figure does not include child care services connected to universities and colleges that are primarily laboratory centres or serving student parents. While there has been an increase in the number of work place child care centres in recent years, these represent only a small percentage of the total number of child care centres in Canada.

The growth in the number of workplace child care centres can be attributed to:

- the lack of other community-based child care options available to families
- government initiatives to encourage workplace child care centres
- interest from unions in pursuing employer support for workplace child care centres at the bargaining table
- employers identifying and responding to employee needs
- rapid growth in the total number of child care centres over the past 20 years

Work Place Child Care Initiatives

Governments have promoted the establishment of child care services at the workplace. New Directions in Child Care, Ontario Government (1987) provided capital and start-up grants to encourage the development of workplace child care centres. Local governments, such as Toronto and Vancouver have encouraged workplace child care centres through the land development process. The federal Child Care Initiatives Fund (Health and Welfare) has supported several workplace child care centres by funding innovative services, needs assessments and start-up costs.

In 1983, the Canadian Auto Workers negotiated a unique clause for a day care fund as an employment equity measure in their collective agreement with Canadian Fab, a subsidiary of American Motors in Stratford, Ont. Canadian Fab agreed to pay two cents for every hour worked by each employee into a day care fund. It was not possible to use the fund to start a child care centre so the fund is now being used to help employees pay fees in community child care centres.

In 1987, CAW surveyed its membership and identified a need for child care. In the three year collective agreement with Chrysler, Ford and General Motors, a fund of \$1.5 million was established for child care.

In 1990, the first child care centre for auto workers opened in Windsor. The centre is a community-based, non-profit program which provides extended hour care from 5:30 am to 1 am. This program, also received funding from the Ontario government to establish flexible child care services, including extended hours, in-home and supervised home child care.

Impact of Workplace Child Care Centres

Workplace child care centres represent a small number of the total child care programs, providing selective services to a few individuals. Further expansion would assist the demand for child care. However, information collected about the workplace child care programs in Canada point to the need for a publicly-funded child care system.

Labour Force Participation and Productivity

There have been a number of studies looking at the effectiveness of workplace child care centres in reducing absenteeism, tardiness and turnover and improving morale (Galinsky, 1988; Strohmer, 1989; Wayne & Burud, 1986). Most report positive findings suggesting workplace child care services are successful in improving overall productivity.

However, most of these studies rely on descriptive information gathered from employers who are providing the services or employees who are using the services and are already predisposed favourably to the programs. Much of the data is gathered through open-ended questions and can be widely interpreted (Lehrer, Santero, & Mohan-Neill, 1991).

One exception is an empirical analysis of the data from a 1988 Biennial Survey of Illinois Registered Nurses. The study considered the actual number of annual hours worked and the attachment of nurses to the employer. The findings reported that workplace child care had a positive effect on both the annual hours worked and reducing turnover (Lehrer, Santero, & Mohan-Neill, 1991).

A study considering workplace child care services, work-family conflict and absenteeism found no significant relationship between on-site workplace child care centres and reductions in tension or absenteeism. However the lack of suitable child care arrangements, whether workplace or otherwise, was reported as the major cause of work-place family tensions in the 1988 National Child Care Survey. Interestingly, results do indicate that satisfaction with child care arrangements, regardless of their location, were significantly related to less work/family conflict and lower levels of absenteeism (Geoff, Mount & Jamison, 1990).

Availability

There has been an increase in workplace centres over the past 15 years, but the approximately 176 centres represent only 2.6 per cent of the licensed child care spaces in Canada (Beach et al, in press). This represents approximately the same percentage as it did in 1985. During the same time period, the total number of regulated child care centres has increased. Specific government initiatives to encourage workplace child care and the economic boom facilitated the development of workplace child care centres during the past decade. However, there are still limits associated with the provision of workplace child care.

- There may be only a few employees in a workplace who are interested in workplace child care. Expansion of small businesses are expected to provide the majority of new jobs in the labour market and will not have the employee capacity to support workplace child care programs.
- Many workplace child care programs are unable to meet employee demand, particularly for infant or toddler care (Rothman-Beach Ass., 1985).
- Many workplace centres (approximately 90) are located in health care facilities (George Brown College, 1990). Fewer than 40 child care programs have been initiated in private sector workplaces

The need for extended hours child care, or child care beyond the traditional work day, is another issue that has looked to workplace child care as a solution. Extended hour child care services have proven difficult to operate even in workplace settings. One study found three barriers: increased costs to parents and to the operator due to low or irregular use of the service, disruptions of children's schedules and difficulty in recruiting qualified staff (George Brown College, 1990). Flexible Child Care in Canada (1989) reported that the demand for extended hour child care is less predictable than for child care during the regular work day. In 1991, very few workplace centres were offering extended hour child care (Beach et al, in press). Another study that reviewed workplace child care centres across Canada found that few programs had requests for extended hours child care, even though several were located in workplaces operating for 24 hours (Mayfield, 1990).

Affordability

Closely connected with availability, affordability remains a major barrier to many families. Workplace child care programs are driven by the same economic and government policies as other child care programs. Parents are expected to pay the operating costs through user fees unless they are low income and meet provincial/municipal eligibility criteria for available child care subsidies. Generally, staff salaries make up 80-85 per cent of a child care centre's operating costs. Trained staff in early childhood education and low staff/child ratios are important components of quality that keep operating costs unavoidably high. While many workplace programs receive free or low cost space and services in-kind, the fee to parents is not substantially reduced. Over 60 per cent of workplace child care centres reported fees comparable to those in the local community. A number of workplace child care centres recently reported financial difficulties (Beach et al, in press).

A study of work-related day care in Canada completed for the Report of the Task Force on Child Care (1986) found that fewer than 20 per cent of work related child care centres received direct financial assistance (Rothman-Beach Associates, 1985). A recent survey found that employers continue to provide very little financial assistance for operating costs or fee reductions (Beach et al, in press). Workplace child care centre fees reflect the actual operating costs which

are only slightly moderated by free or inexpensive space. Real costs of child care services are high and government child care subsidies are only available for a few. Many workers therefore find child care centres at the workplace available but not affordable.

Workplace child care programs which do receive support from the employer (usually a employer in the public service supported by tax dollars) often serve higher income two parent families. The Treasury Board of Canada (1984) conducted an evaluation of the first three child care centres established as workplace centres in federal government buildings. The report found that the centres were primarily used by two-parent, one-child families with high family incomes.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR WORKPLACE CHILD CARE CENTRES

A research paper on supports for working families concludes its review of workplace child care services by stating:

While workplace-sponsored child care is a welcome form of family-responsive services which increases the supply of child care spaces, it is no panacea, and does not take the place of other, more systematic means to ensure that all families have access to affordable, high quality child care services.

(Lero & Kyle, p.44, 1989)

The Report of the Task Force on Child Care (1986) concludes its review with the following:

It [work-related child care] is, however, a service that has developed in the absence of an adequate supply of community-based child care and, given its limitations, it is not in itself a solution to the need for a comprehensive system.

(Cooke, et al p. 71)

Public hearings were held across Canada between March and June 1986 by the Parliamentary Special Committee on Child Care. There were 975 submissions from individuals, local groups and national organizations including representation from trade unions, social services, educators organizations, business organizations, elected politicians, parents and child care providers. An analysis of the transcripts from these hearings found that 96 respondents considered work-related child care. The majority of the respondents (95 per cent) recommended that work-related child care be one of many options within a comprehensive child care system, while 5 per cent of the respondents recommended that work-related child care be promoted over and above other child care options (Friendly, Mathien & Willis, 1987).

A public opinion poll on child care conducted in April 1991 for the federal government indicates only 11 per cent of the respondents believed that the business sector should have the primary responsibility for providing or paying for child care (Decima Research, 1991).

Child care centres in the workplace will continue as one of many possible locations for child care facilities. Workplace child care will not be a major provider of child care in Canada because the costs are too high and the immediate returns too low for most employers, even with significant government start-up and capital grants. The employer who provides a workplace child care setting is unlikely to be the recipient of that child's later labour contribution and next year's bottomline will not reflect a cost saving. At the same time, in some workplaces, on-site child care facilities are possible and provide services that are welcomed by employees and their families, and add to the limited stock of quality, regulated child care.

Other Workplace Child Care Options

Regulated Home Child Care Services

Regulated home child care is provided in a caregiver's own home, and regulated by the provincial or territorial government. In Ontario, caregivers are supervised by a licensed agency and regulations stipulate a maximum of five children in a single home child care setting. The licensed agencies are responsible for ensuring regulations are followed, seeking out appropriate private home child care providers and matching them with users, providing on-going support and opportunities for in-service training to providers, and managing financial transactions.

This type of setting may be able to offer more flexible hours to meet the extended hour child care needs. Regulated home child care can be developed as an extension of a workplace child care centre. However, high provider turnover can be a problem and child care homes must be monitored regularly to ensure high quality and to enforce governmental regulations.

There are very few private home child care programs attached to a workplace in Canada (Mayfield, 1990).

Resource & Referral Services

Resource and referral services provide information to parents about child care alternatives and help them locate child care services that satisfy their individual needs and preferences. Child care, like computers, is a new world to many Canadians, therefore referral services, as a guide, can be helpful.

Child care information services are becoming more common in urban areas across the United States (Mayfield, 1990). An American expert in work and family issues including work-related child care suggests that child care information and counselling services will expand rapidly in the future (Khan and Kammerman, 1987). However, these services do not appear to be expanding at the same rate in Canada.

Resource and referral services only work well in locations where child care options are readily available and affordable in the community. To be effective, information must be frequently updated which is expensive.

Resource and referral services may appear to be addressing the child care issue but do nothing to increase the supply of child care services.

Emergency & Sick Care

All child care arrangements break down occasionally. Some child care services make short-term arrangements with caregivers who provide care in their own homes or in the child's home. A few organizations in North America have set up a small facility to care for sick children or a drop-in program to provide care when regular arrangements are interrupted.

A review of such programs and preliminary findings from Ontario pilot projects suggest that such services are very expensive to operate and not affordable for most families (Friendly, et al, 1990). The preliminary report of the pilot projects for the Flexible Model Project in Ontario indicates care in the child's own home is the most popular form of sick care. All the pilot projects that offer sick and emergency care options rely on government funding to operate. Most parents would prefer to stay at home with sick children which could be addressed through public policy mandating parental leaves.

Family Support Benefits

Leaves

Maternity, parental and family responsibility leaves are family support benefits which contribute significantly to a comprehensive child care system.

A study on family responsibility leave commissioned by Labour Canada defines family leave as:

the right to take a certain number of days off each year for such family-related responsibilities as caring for a sick child or other dependent family member in an emergency, accompanying a child or an elderly or disabled family member to a medical appointment, making alternative child care arrangements for family members when their regular caregivers are sick, attending a child's school or day care centre to meet with teachers or caregivers, and similar family needs

(Monica Townson Associates, p. 4, 1988)

Family responsibility leave supports employees with young children and supplements child care arrangements. At the same time, it addresses broader family demands and therefore benefits a larger proportion of employees. The provision of family responsibility leave can have a bigger impact in a workplace than the provision of a child care centre. More employees are likely to directly benefit.

A number of studies suggest that parents would prefer to stay at home with their own children rather than use emergency or sick child care programs. A 1990 study sponsored by the Victorian Order of Nurses in the Waterloo Region Branch, which considered working parents preferred options for the care of sick children, found that the majority want some form of paid leave so that they can care for their own children when they are ill. The preliminary data collected in needs assessments for the pilot projects in the Ontario Flexible Model Project indicated that the vast majority of parents want to stay home with paid leave when their children are ill.

In Canada, family responsibility leave is a statutory right only under two jurisdictions - regulations governing the federal public service and Quebec labour legislation (Townson, 1988). All employees of the federal public service have the right to leave with pay for family responsibilities up to a maximum of five days in any fiscal year. Quebec labour legislation provides for additional leave only for circumstances related to pregnancy, such as a threatened miscarriage. It does not cover other family responsibility circumstances.

Family responsibility leave is available to other employees either through their collective agreements or through employer personnel policies. Leave for Employees with Family Responsibilities (1988) reported a survey of both employers and trade unions in Canada and the data banks of collective agreements maintained by Labour Canada, to determine the availability of family responsibility leave.

The results of this study indicate the following:

- Few unions have included family responsibility leaves in collective bargaining negotiations, although there is support for the concept.
- It appears that the majority of family responsibility provisions allow for 2 - 5 days per year.
- Among organized labour, federal and provincial public servants are most likely to have paid responsibility leave. It is not usually provided for unionized workers in the private sector.
- Although employers were likely to recognize the concept, none of the respondents in the survey of the 35 largest private sector employers had any formal policies or procedures for family responsibility leave.

- Over half of the respondents for private sector employers did indicate that semi-formal (using other leave options already in place) and informal family responsibility leave options (ad hoc, by request) were available at the discretion of the employer.

The Conference Board of Canada's survey (1989) of employers indicated that 55 per cent of the respondents indicated that they have special family-related leaves. However, the majority of these arrangements are available on an informal basis. Arrangements for family responsibility leave for most Canadian families are ad hoc and informal. In practice, the current situation erodes vacation and sick leave. Women, often still perceived as the primary family caregivers, are particularly vulnerable to this erosion of vacation and sick leave.

Minimum parental leaves are available through the Unemployment Insurance Act to eligible employees. However, many new parents are not employees (including self-employed persons and students) or have been employed for an insufficient period of time to qualify for the benefits.

Employers may choose to add on additional paid or unpaid parental leave. Several unions have introduced top-up maternity leave benefits at the bargaining table. Increased parental leave benefits can reduce the demand for infant child care services.

Family responsibility and parental leaves are important pieces of comprehensive child care services and benefits needed by Canadian families. It is also important in assisting families with elderly and family members with disabilities. It should not be left to the benevolence of individual employers or to inclusion in trade union collective bargaining process. These initiatives must now lead the way to inclusion in labour legislation, ensuring family responsibility leave for all employees.

Work Arrangements

Many families arrange their work schedules to accommodate child care responsibilities, either because they want to spend as much time as possible caring for their children and/or lack other child care options.

Work arrangement possibilities include:

- flex time
- part time
- shift work
- compressed work week
- job-sharing

In a survey of employers, the Conference Board of Canada found that nearly 50 per cent of the respondents had instituted flexible working hours. Almost 30 per cent were found to offer part-time work options with pro-rated benefits. Also more than 25 per cent of the respondents offer the compressed work week options.

Preliminary needs assessments conducted for the Flexible Services Development Project in Ontario indicated that some employees in dual-earner families prefer shift work. An overview of child care needs assessments reports from January 1987 to May 1991 indicates many families who organize work schedules to accommodate child care are satisfied with these arrangements (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1991).

Many Canadian families have sought out and used alternative work arrangements to meet their child care needs. It is important to recognize that this choice has been made where other solutions, such as access to affordable, high quality child care centres, may not have been available.

There are a number of health concerns related to shift work. Parents who are working outside the home during evening and night hours and then caring for a child during the regular work day have little time for sleep. Such arrangements can be stressful for both parent and child. Effective parenting can hardly be expected from a tired adult. Prolonged stints without sleep or frequent changes in sleep patterns can increase health problems and general stress. Also some critics suggest that family relationships may be jeopardized if parents work opposite shifts with little opportunity to spend time together. Single parents who work night shift and sleep during the day, often feel they do not see enough of their children.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS AND UNIONS

Families with young children need available, affordable, high quality child care services and a range of supportive family benefits. The initiatives of individual employers and unions are limited in addressing these needs.

There are a number of barriers:

- It is difficult to establish workplace practices which are different from other workplaces. In Canada, maternity leave is widely available and generally used by women who give birth, or adopt a child and is considered a standard practice. Paternity leave, on the other hand, is only starting to become an accepted practice. In some labour market sectors fathers taking leave to care for young children is not an accepted option.
- Child care services and family responsibility benefits are expensive for individual employers to provide, particularly when only a minority of employees may benefit.

- Trade unions may have difficulty in winning support from their memberships in identifying child care related issues as priorities for collective bargaining.
- Women continue to be primary caregivers and most likely users of these services and benefits. Some critics argue that women will be perceived as expensive employees to potential employers.

Employers and workers are facing a tough struggle in Canadian workplaces. Child care services and family support benefits are needed to address labour needs, employment equity issue and productivity. Employers and unions can take steps to:

- Initiate workplace child care centres
- Extend parental leave and benefits
- Ensure family responsibility leave provisions that enable parents to care for sick children and attend medical and school appointments
- Provide flexible work schedules that do not penalize employees or risk their health.

They should be seen as important first steps in establishing a comprehensive system of child care services and family support benefits accessible to all Canadian families. A comprehensive system cannot be constructed solely from the individual efforts of parents or from a few workplaces. Rather, Canada must recognize a collective responsibility for ensuring quality early child care and education services and family support benefits.

Employers and unions do have an important role to play in creating public policy. Just as history records their importance in bringing in other social policies that have built a public education system, national health program, unemployment insurance and the Canada Pension Plan,

III. COMPREHENSIVE CHILD CARE POLICIES

TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE, UNIVERSAL, SYSTEM OF CHILD CARE

The Report of the Task Force on Child Care (1986) recommended that:

the federal, provincial and territorial governments, working together, should develop complementary systems of child care and parental leave that are as comprehensive, accessible and competent as our systems of health care and education.

(Cooke et al, 1986, p. 270)

Today child care is less available and less affordable to Canadian families. Even though parental leave benefits have been introduced as an extension of maternity leave benefits and can be taken by either parent, maternity leave benefits have been eroded; and family responsibility leaves are not generally available.

This paper has summarized a number of initiatives taken by employers and unions to provide child care services and related benefits. Many have been successful in meeting the needs of the families who use them.

Employers and unions can provide leadership and participate in building momentum across the country for public policy, legislation and funding necessary to create a comprehensive system of child care benefits and services. There are concrete social and economic benefits to such a system.

Child care activists are putting forward a renewed child care policy agenda leading up through and following the next federal election. Child care in the 1990s must be viewed as a social and economic investment that benefits not only children and their families but also society as a whole.

Principals Governing A Child Care System

A child care system for Canada that benefits children, families and society could be built on these principles:

UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE: All families must have access to child care services.

HIGH QUALITY: Child care programs should be based on established predictors of quality including non-profit sponsorship, trained staff, and provincial/territorial regulation which reflects knowledge of child development.

COMPREHENSIVE: A range of child care services and benefits includes a continuum of child care programs for infants through school-aged children, and family responsibility and parent leave benefits. Child care services and benefits must be flexible to meet diverse family needs.

EQUITABLE: Appropriate child care services and benefits must be available for families regardless of family income, geographic location or employment status.

ACCOUNTABLE: A child care system must be responsible to families who are users, local communities, and governments which are providing public funds. Democratic decision making structures and local planning mechanisms will support a child care system which is responsive to local cultural and linguistic realities. Public or non-profit administration can ensure accountability for public funds.

A recent comprehensive review of child care policy issues sponsored by the National Research Council in the United States states

..... universal child care emphasizes quality, availability and affordability. It would also encourage women's labour force participation as a means of economic self-sufficiency and reduce the stigma of programs for poor children. Such a policy would provide maximum support for worker stability and increase the available supply of labour for employers. Research suggests that comprehensive early childhood education programs can have short-term as well as long-term benefits to children, families and society. They can also be designed for facilities in neighborhoods where they are most needed.

(Hayes, Palmer & Zaslow, 1990, p. 255)

France's Early Child Care and Education Services

In France, all children have access to public preschool programs for children 3 - 5 years which are offered through the school system. The preschools operate from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm with wrap-around after school programs available for an hour before and after regular school hours. The programs are popular for both families with working parents and stay-at-home parents with enrollment levels at 90 per cent of the child population, although attendance is voluntary.

There are several types of infant and toddler care available including centres, family day care networks, and licensed family day care providers. Licensed infant and toddler care is available to 30 per cent of the children whose parents are working.

The preschool programs operated by the public school system are free and parents pay about 20 per cent of the costs of other child care services. Government funding for the other 80 per cent comes from a value-added sales tax, local taxes and an employer payroll tax.

France's commitment to public investment in child care is based on the belief that all children benefit from playing and working together co-operatively with other children with the guidance of skilled adults. This is backed up national census data that indicates preschool attendance improves all children's chances of passing grade one—an important predictor of later school performance.

(Richardson & Marx, 1989 & Melhurish & Moss, 1991)

Sweden's Family Support Benefits

Swedish policies assume parents will participate in the labour force while they have young children. In addition to extensive provision of child care services, Sweden has a lengthy parental leave with full financial compensation and mandated work arrangement options.

- Parental leave is 18 months and parents have considerable flexibility in how it is taken up until the child is eight years old. The time can be taken all at once, divided into several breaks, or used on a part-time basis. There is full financial compensation.
- Parents have a mandated right to work a six hour day with pro-rated wages until the child starts school at age seven.
- Parents may use up to 90 days paid leave per year per child to care for a child under the age of 12 who is sick or whose regular caregiver is sick.

(Melhuish & Moss, 1991)

ADVOCATING FOR A CHILD CARE SYSTEM IN CANADA

A universally-accessible, high quality, comprehensive, equitable and accountable child care system and supportive family benefits in Canada is essential for both employers and employees. Child care activists across the country have worked together in local, provincial and federal coalitions with labour, women's and social service organizations to ensure that the issue of child care has a place on provincial and federal government agendas.

Now a broader base of support is needed to ensure a child care system and guaranteed family benefits become a reality in Canada. Creating and sustaining the momentum for change to implement these initiatives will not be easy. It will require the co-operation and collaboration of employers and unions to build the political will necessary to adopt innovative, comprehensive public policy.

Endorse a Child Care Agenda

Campaign Child Care is a vision for Canadian child care based on the principles identified earlier. It includes emergency measures to stop the disintegration of child care services, the introduction of a new federal/provincial/territorial child care program and changes in labour legislation ensuring family support benefits. *Campaign Child Care* is gathering support from child care organizations, women's groups, social service organizations, academic institutions, trade unions, business communities, professional groups and parents. Employers and unions can endorse this statement of support for new public policy initiatives and emergency action to stem the immediate child care crisis.

Campaign Child Care: A Child Care Agenda for the 90s calls on the new federal government to take the following steps:

Immediate Measures: (Within one year of new mandate)

- *Within 90 days, distribute an action plan on child care funding that supports the long-term goal of establishing a universally, publicly funded, non-profit, high quality and comprehensive child care system for all Canadian children.*
- *Lift the ceiling on the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) in Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta, to stabilize the current crisis in child care.*
- *Reinstate federal transfer payments to previous levels.*
- *Reinstate the \$60-million promised for First Nations initiative as a first step.*
- *Extend the Child Care Initiatives Fund on a permanent basis to encourage ongoing Canadian research and demonstration of innovative programs.*

- *Establish a federal capital funding program to develop new non-profit child care spaces.*

Medium Term Measures: (Within three years)

- *Introduce a comprehensive package of family leave benefits including:*
 - *increasing unemployment insurance benefits to 95 per cent of parent's wages;*
 - *paid parental leave up to one year for all new parents, including twenty weeks of maternity leave;*
 - *amending the Canada Labour Code legislation to provide for a minimum of 10 days paid family responsibility leave.*

The federal government should encourage provincial/territorial/First Nations to introduce similar leave amendments.

- *Advance a national child care policy which has the following characteristics:*
 - *a federal policy framework which recognises provincial/territorial/First Nations jurisdiction for child care services, but incorporates and defines the principles of universal accessibility, comprehensiveness, non-profit and high quality;*
 - *federal funding for provincial/territorial/First Nations child care programs which is contingent upon provincial compliance with the federal framework and recognises the respective cost sharing abilities of the federal and provincial governments;*
 - *a timetable for federal/provincial/territorial/First Nations negotiations which set goals and targets for child care plans and establishes the details of funding arrangements.*

Long-Term Measures: (By the year 2005)

- *Full implementation of a comprehensive, publicly funded, universally accessible and high quality child care system in Canada.*

Take a Public Position

Employers and unions can take positions to government and the public advocating for child care policy, legislation and financial changes.

Special Committee on Child Care

The public hearings for the Special Committee on Child Care (March - June, 1986) held across Canada in 31 towns and cities heard from trade union leaders and rank and file members and from the business community including several local Chambers of Commerce, The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Association of Women Executives and several corporations. The Canadian Labour Congress representing millions of Canadian workers, submitted a brief to the Special Committee calling on the federal government to develop a national child care system that would provide universal access, be non-profit, government funded, comprehensive, and of high quality. The CLC also called upon the federal government to enshrine parental rights in legislation as a complement to child care services.

Form Coalitions

Coalitions are effective in broadening the base of support for new public policy on child care. Businesses and unions can join and contribute to existing child care activist campaigns for new child care policy.

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

The Ontario Federation of Labour organized a series of public forums on child child throughout Ontario in 1981. As a follow-up to the forums, a brief was written by 17 provincial organizations and presented to the Cabinet of the Government of Ontario entitled Daycare Deadline:1990. The organizations, including teachers' federations, trade unions, women's groups, social welfare organizations, and the Association of Early Childhood Education, Ontario founded the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care continues to include representation from major provincial organizations as well as local child care coalitions, child care programs and individuals including child care staff and parents.

Negotiate Support in Collective Agreements

A unionized workplace can use the collective bargaining process to negotiate support for child care services and family support benefits. The Ontario Federation of Labour has recognized family issues as a negotiating priority (Ontario Federation of Labour, 1989). The same process can be used to negotiate strong policy statements from employers and unions advocating for a comprehensive child care system and legislated family support benefits.

Organize Child Care Staff

Salaries and working conditions of child care staff are one of the fundamental problems in the provision of child care. Staff are in fact subsidizing child care services through their low wages. Because wages are low, rates of staff turnover are too high to ensure quality care.

Unionization of child care staff applies pressure to improve salaries and benefits. Because this is limited within the current user fee system, unionization applies further pressure to create a funded child care system.

AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

Public support for universally accessible child care services and family support benefits will carry costs. But the investment here will produce strong returns to Canadian taxpayers. Child care is an important part of an infrastructure supporting economic and social stability.

The public opinion poll on child care conducted for the Federal government showed strong support for more government financial support directly to child care services as a means to ensure more spaces are available (Decima Research, 1991).

Fraser Mustard, (President of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research), advanced the idea that "the best economic decision a society could make would be to invest more in child care, because we know, by the way, that the kinds of investments we make there are going to pay,

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