

PRESS STATEMENT  
FEBRUARY 6, 1989

I AM LAUREL ROTHMAN, PRESIDENT OF THE OCBCC, WHICH REPRESENTS CHILD CARE STAFF, PARENTS, TEACHERS' ORGANIZATIONS, TRADE UNIONS, SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS AND WOMEN'S GROUPS. WE ARE HERE TO CHALLENGE THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT TO DELIVER ON ITS COMMITMENT TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF CHILD CARE FOR ALL FAMILIES AS PROMISED ALMOST TWO YEARS AGO IN NEW DIRECTIONS.

THE RECENT ARTICLES IN THE GLOBE AND MAIL HAVE RE-CONFIRMED THE SAGGING STATE OF CHILD CARE WHICH, FOR SOME CHILDREN AND PARENTS, IS SO POOR THAT WE BELIEVE WE ARE AT A CRISIS POINT. WE WOULD LIKE TO REMIND YOU THAT ALTHOUGH THE GLOBE AND MAIL'S EXPOSE IS THE MOST GRAPHIC AND DETAILED PICTURE OF THE DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS IN MANY CHILD CARE CENTRES, IT IS NOT NEW INFORMATION. AS LONG AGO AS 1984, SIMILAR MATERIAL WAS PRESENTED TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. AGAIN, IN 1985, BRIEFS TO THE KATIE COOKE TASK FORCE ON CHILD CARE RAISED CONCERNS ABOUT QUALITY. PRESENTATIONS TO THE FEDERAL SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CHILD CARE BY ONTARIO GROUPS AND PARENTS AGAIN PRESENTED THIS PICTURE PUBLICLY. TWO YEARS AGO, A SELECT COMMITTEE, STRUCK BY THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT TO EXAMINE THE ROLE OF THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES, HEARD ALARMING REPORTS FROM PARENTS, CHILD CARE STAFF AND EVEN PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS. IN MAY, 1988, THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES RELEASED A STUDY WHICH

SHOWED THAT SOME CHILD CARE CENTRES IN METROPOLITAN TORONTO RECEIVED A LICENSE EVEN THOUGH THEY DID NOT COMPLY WITH THE DAY NURSERIES ACT.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL'S REVIEW OF THE LICENSING RECORDS FROM ACROSS THE PROVINCE CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES TWO POINTS:

FIRST, THERE ARE INADEQUATE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE HIGH QUALITY PROGRAMS THAT PARENTS AND CHILDREN NEED AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS PROMISED. THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH HUMAN, CAPITAL OR OTHER FINANCIAL RESOURCES. FOR EXAMPLE, AN AVERAGE CHILD CARE SUPERVISOR DOES EVERYTHING INCLUDING SHOPPING FOR FOOD, DEALING WITH ILL CHILDREN, PLANNING PROGRAM ACTIVITIES, CLEARING CLOGGED TOILETS, PREPARING BUDGET SUBMISSIONS, FIGURING OUT WHO WILL CLEAN THE CENTRE, AND PROVIDING PARENT EDUCATION... AND PROBABLY EARNS NO MORE THAN \$25,000 PER YEAR. IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS, PRINCIPALS NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT PLUMBING OR MEETING A PAYROLL YET EARN TWICE AS MUCH MONEY.

IN ADDITION, THERE ARE INSUFFICIENT HUMAN RESOURCES WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES. IT IS CLEAR THAT THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH LICENSING OFFICIALS TO PROPERLY MONITOR PROGRAMS. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE APPEARS TO BE NO MINISTERIAL POLICY THAT TELLS THESE OFFICIALS THAT A CENTRE WHICH IS UNSAFE OR IMPROPERLY STAFFED SHOULD BE CLOSED. AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT EVEN WHEN LICENSING OFFICIALS COMMIT SCARCE RESOURCES TO DOCUMENTING HABITUAL NON-COMPLIANCE, THEIR EFFORTS ARE USUALLY IN VAIN.

JUST AS CHILD CARE LACKS HUMAN RESOURCES, IT LACKS CAPITAL RESOURCES. AS THE GLOBE AND MAIL DESCRIBED, IN DRYDEN, THE SUPERVISOR OF THE MUNICIPAL CHILD CARE CENTRE, MUNICIPAL AND LOCAL PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS WERE AWARE THAT THE CENTRE'S BUILDING AND EQUIPMENT WERE UNSAFE. YET, THERE WAS NO MONEY TO REMEDY THE SITUATION AND THE CENTRE WAS ALLOWED TO REMAIN OPEN. IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR CHILD CARE CENTRES TO LACK THE BASIC RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAINTAIN GOOD OR EVEN SAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN.

SECOND, THE GLOBE AND MAIL HAS RECONFIRMED THAT THE COMMERCIAL CHILD CARE SECTOR IS LESS LIKELY THAN THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR TO MEET MINIMUM GOVERNMENT STANDARDS AND MORE LIKELY TO BE VERY SERIOUSLY DEFICIENT. OVER THE YEARS, WE HAVE HEARD AGAIN AND AGAIN FROM CHILD CARE STAFF AND PARENTS WHO HAVE TOLD US ABOUT INADEQUATE FOOD, SHORT-STAFFING, UNSAVOURY AND UNSAFE CONDITIONS WHICH FLOURISH IN THE COMMERCIAL CHILD CARE SECTOR. AS WE ARE ALL AWARE, LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY TO PARENTS AND THE INCENTIVE TO MAKE A PROFIT ARE NOT COMPATIBLE WITH MEETING THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS OF THE DAY NURSERIES ACT LET ALONE PROVIDING HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE.

CHILD CARE IN ONTARIO IS AT THE BREAKING POINT. WE ARE CRITICALLY SHORT OF PUBLIC RESOURCES. WE WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR IS A SUBSTANTIAL DRAIN ON OUR SCARCE RESOURCES. A STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES IN 1988 DOCUMENTED THIS: "PROGRAM ADVISORS SPENT MORE OF THEIR TIME AT COMMERCIAL-OPERATED CENTRES THAN



NON-PROFIT PARENT/COMMUNITY BOARD CENTRES, AND MOST OF THIS TIME WAS FOR QUALITY CONTROL REASONS". THESE LICENSING OFFICIALS HAD TO MAKE A MONITORING VISIT TO COMMERCIAL CENTRES ALMOST 3 TIMES AS OFTEN AS TO THOSE WITH A COMMUNITY BOARD.

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES HAS SAID THAT THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR NEEDS MORE PUBLIC RESOURCES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY CARE. SCARCE PUBLIC RESOURCES SHOULD NOT BE USED IN THIS WAY. INSTEAD, WE URGE THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR TO REDIRECT THEIR PROFITS TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF CARE.

THERE ARE MANY EXAMPLES IN ONTARIO OF CHILD CARE PROGRAMS WHICH PROVIDE WARM, ENRICHING, CARING AND BENEFICIAL ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND SUPPORT FOR THEIR FAMILIES. I WOULD LIKE TO REMIND YOU THAT THE ONTARIO COALITION FOR BETTER CHILD CARE HAS NEVER CALLED ONLY FOR MORE CHILD CARE BUT HAS ALWAYS ADVOCATED FOR BETTER CHILD CARE. WE HAVE RESISTED FALSE SOLUTIONS WHICH PROMISE AN EXPANSION OF CHILD CARE WITHOUT THE NECESSARY RESOURCES AND POLICIES WHICH ENSURE A HIGH QUALITY, NON-PROFIT CHILD CARE SYSTEM FOR ALL FAMILIES.

IN CONCLUSION, THE ONTARIO COALITION FOR BETTER CHILD CARE CALLS ON THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. WITH REGARD TO THE MINISTER'S RECENTLY-ANNOUNCED REVIEW OF INSPECTION PROCEDURES:
  - A. WITHIN 90 DAYS, TABLE AN INTERIM REPORT OUTLINING PROGRESS ON THE REVIEW IN THE LEGISLATURE;
  - B. ISSUE FULLY-REVISED INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES WITHIN 6 MONTHS;
2. IMMEDIATELY MAKE ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO HELP REMEDY VIOLATIONS RELATED TO RECORD-KEEPING, UNSAFE EQUIPMENT, AND INADEQUATE PHYSICAL FACILITIES;
3. WITHIN 30 DAYS, CLOSE CHILD CARE PROGRAMS WHICH ARE IN SERIOUS VIOLATION OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AND STAFFING REQUIREMENTS OF THE DAY NURSERIES ACT, MAKING PROVISION TO HELP FAMILIES FIND ALTERNATIVE CARE;
4. TAKE IMMEDIATE STEPS TO END FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO COMMERCIAL CHILD CARE PROGRAMS BY:
  - A. LIMITING NEW PURCHASE-OF-SERVICE AGREEMENTS TO SERVE SUBSIDIZED CHILDREN TO NON-PROFIT PROGRAMS ONLY;
  - B. WITHIN 30 DAYS, ANNOUNCE A DETAILED PLAN WHICH OUTLINES PHASING OUT EXISTING PURCHASE-OF-SERVICE AGREEMENTS TO COMMERCIAL PROGRAMS WITHIN 5 YEARS;
  - C. WITHIN 30 DAYS, PRODUCE THE PLAN FOR CONVERSION OF COMMERCIAL PROGRAMS PROMISED IN NEW DIRECTIONS IN 1987;

5. CALL UPON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO ENACT, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES, NATIONAL CHILD CARE LEGISLATION WHICH WILL DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF HIGH QUALITY, NON-PROFIT CHILD CARE FOR ALL FAMILIES.