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CANADIAN DAY CARE ADVOCACY ASSOCIATION

THE CDCAA STORY

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LA PROMOTION DES SERVICES  
DE GARDE A L'ENFANCE

February, 1984

## WHAT IS THE CDCAA ?

The Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association is an incorporated, non-profit, voluntary organization. It is membership based, has a regionally representative executive, and is linked to fee paying local, provincial and national support and sustainer groups.

The Association was formed to promote and advocate an expanded and improved day care system that addresses the immediate and long-term needs of children, parents and child care providers. Emphasis is placed on high quality care and achieving comprehensive, universally accessible, public child care services.

The CDCAA finds its roots in day care communities and homes across the country. As well, it is a natural out-growth of local and provincial organizing efforts.

Canadian citizens are saying it's time to give our children the care and opportunities they deserve. Parents want affordable, accessible, high quality day care ...now. And yet day care is in a state of paralysis, if not serious crisis. The CDCAA was formed to address this urgent social problem.

## ORIGINS AND BACKGROUND

The CDCAA officially grew out of the 2nd Canadian Day Care Conference held September, 1982 in Winnipeg.

Over 700 delegates - from all provinces and territories - attended the Winnipeg Conference. Concerned

parents, users of day care services, and child care employees, directors and board members were present. Representatives from women's groups, labour organizations, social service agencies, educational institutions, and regional and provincial day care associations and coalitions also participated. The large turn-out reflected the urgent need and widespread desire to propose solutions for Canada's day care crisis.

Virtually all delegates agreed that abysmally insufficient government funding and restrictive, welfare-oriented day care legislation have created an impossible situation for Canadian children and parents. While Canadian society and families have gone through major transformations, governments are prescribing 19th century remedies for today's problems. It simply doesn't work. It makes no sense. And as a result Canadian parents don't know where to turn or how to cope.

Following two days of discussion and workshops, the delegates in Winnipeg used the opportunity to begin the process of building a Canada-wide organization.

For too long, the delegates felt, local day care advocates had remained isolated from their counterparts across the country. For too long, government underfunding and political intransigence had gone uncontested by a strong, Canada-wide organization solidly rooted in the day care community. And for too long, we lacked a consensus on precisely what kind of policy direction we require.

For these reasons, it was time to come of age politically, the conference declared, and show governments

that a broad spectrum of Canadians - a new majority - want good day care now. The delegates then elected a 37-member steering committee to begin the educational, organizational and political process for resolving Canada's day care crisis.

Subsequently, in March, 1983, the steering committee elected an 8-member executive of the CDCAA representing all regions of the country. The executive was given a one-year focused mandate, one seen as appropriate for a young, developing organization, yet compatible with many of the more ambitious policy resolutions adopted at the conference.

The Executive mandate included creating a firm funding base for the Association, providing a bilingual newsletter (The Day Care Advocate), formulating specific proposals at the federal level which would immediately provide direct funding, and developing a broadly-based constituency in order to make day care an issue in the forthcoming federal election. In addition, the executive was mandated to oversee the democratic election of 2 representatives from each province and territory to form a new 2-year term steering committee by April, 1984.

We can now state without equivocation that we have indeed come of age politically. The response to our Association has been overwhelmingly positive. Day care is quickly becoming a major issue of concern in the mainstream political discourse. Day care centres, parents, women's groups, labour organizations, and child care associations across Canada have joined the Association.

Our first executive has fulfilled its mandate. And we hope to establish a national office with full-time staff in Ottawa by Spring 1984.

#### CONSENSUS BUILDING

The need for improved day care has been voiced by many organizations in Canada for some time. During the last decade or so there has been a groundswell of support for good day care. Women's organizations, labour unions, Federal commissions, and Provincial advocacy groups have all voiced support for good day care. But for all the time and energy expended, child care in Canada remains hobbled by antiquated philosophical assertions, poor government planning and grossly insufficient government funding.

We believe that the major barriers to bringing Canada's day care policy into the 20th Century has been government inaction and procrastination. At the same time, however, the variety of positions and views expressed by day care advocates has not helped. The lack of consensus has detracted from our capacity to win substantial gains. And so we view consensus building as an important part of our developmental process. The Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association has worked hard to develop a consensus. It's an ongoing process, of course, but already we can say we've become a united, popular and representative voice for day care. What, then, have we agreed upon?

Through a process of consultation with our 37-member steering committee - which comprises a group predictably diverse in geography and association with day care - we have arrived at a strong consensus around the following points as an initial basis of agreement for our Association:

- We believe that high quality, accessible, affordable child care services should be available to every Canadian child in need.

- We view day care as a "societal issue" and oppose attempts by governments to isolate and characterize it as merely a concern of current users, providers and professional experts. All Canadian citizens are concerned with how we as a society provide support care for our children. Indeed, citizens from all walks of life and regions are saying we need support now.

- We see it as essential that the CDCAA be a broadly-based, popular, representative and bilingual organization and specifically include linkages with change-oriented groups such as women's organizations, provincial advocacy groups and labour groups. This is not a vague concept. It is presently being practised in two ways.

1. Our election for steering committee members involves a deliberate process of including these groups in the definition of the "day care constituency".

2. Our membership drive includes a process of active solicitation of these groups as supporting or sustaining members.

- We recognize, first and foremost, that the major question with respect to day care utilization is parental choice. We do not, for example, feel that by definition all mothers of young children should be in the official labour force. Nor do we believe that women should be denied access to the official job market, or obstructed from equality of opportunity within it. Our view is that an enlightened, modern society provides a range of service

options which permit parents to make intelligent decisions about child care. Canadian parents are now denied this choice.

- We recognize that the pressing need for a comprehensive day care system represents a significant cultural change in Canada. Because of this, many Canadians have sincere questions about whether day care is good for children. Our experience - and evaluation of available documentation - demonstrates that high quality day care is a beneficial service for children and parents. The Association wants to assist the public in discussing the range of assumptions and values residing behind the issue of childcare. We have requested a Parliamentary Task Force to, in part, facilitate this dialogue.

- We are extremely critical of the fact that present Federal legislation (enshrined within the Canada Assistance Plan) restricts and defines public funding for day care as a form of welfare. The problems of insufficient government funding, the entrenchment of user fees and the application of stringent needs tests have become the norm because of this. Public funding for select users of day care reinforces and strengthens the user fee model of day care. According to this view, day care is purchased on the open market, and the role of government is to merely assist specific low income parents who cannot compete effectively as consumers in the day care market place. Children, child care providers and the overwhelming majority of Canadian parents have suffered because of this antiquated model. This approach finds its roots in 19th century thinking which viewed day care as a form of charitable relief for poor, destitute working mothers. We believe we must come to terms with

current realities. For example, more mothers of young children now work for a wage or salary than those who are staying home full time, and their numbers are increasing each year.

The history of other universal services (education, health care) and our present experience with day care leads us to believe that high quality, stable, equally accessible day care cannot operate as a user-fee service.

. We are opposed to lobbying for the reform of the Canada Assistance Plan as a mechanism for improving day care. However, because the provinces have failed to utilize federal funding under CAP fully, we support groups who are pressing their provincial governments to utilize CAP more effectively now.

. We are opposed to lobbying for an increase in the child care income tax deduction. Child care tax deductions are a regressive and inequitable form of taxation. Moreover, these deductions represent a public expenditure which are an outgrowth of a policy which reinforces the user-fee model (the deduction assists individual parents as consumers). While it should be recognized that the conversion of the tax deduction to a tax credit would represent a shift toward a more progressive taxation policy, this approach would also reinforce the inadequacies of the user-fee system of child care.

. We consider it grossly unfair that day care employees, mainly women, are now expected to subsidize good day care through low wages and inferior working conditions. Day care employees should receive wages, salaries and benefits commensurate with the value of their work. For too long, we believe, government underfunding has created artificial



conflicts of interest between parents and child care providers. The needs of both groups must be addressed.

. Although we acknowledge and respect day care as a matter of provincial jurisdiction (and oppose attempts to impose national regulations), we believe the dismal state of day care in Canada represents a national crisis which the Federal government has the responsibility to assume leadership on.

. We see it as vitally important that the Federal government adopts policies which recognize day care as an essential community service, one which receives direct funding that supports all users, regardless of income. Most parents now find day care costs prohibitive. Like health care or universities, child care should not be treated as a welfare service. It is no less important than these other services.

. We believe the Federal government has a clear constitutional basis for expanding its "spending power" in respect to day care. We also believe the Federal government must show leadership now and stop seeing day care as simply a provincial responsibility. The Federal government has already taken on a position of leadership by defining day care as welfare within CAP. It has as well reinforced the user-fee model as a consequence of using section 63 of the Income Tax Act. We are looking for more enlightened leadership.

#### IMMEDIATE PROPOSALS FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION

The time for decisive government action on the issue of day care has arrived. It's time for the Federal

government to acknowledge the interface which exists between our lives as parents and members of society who work, go to school, and live public lives.

With this in mind, we are placing two major proposals before the Federal government. These include:

1. The immediate appointment of a Parliamentary Task Force to develop a comprehensive plan for the implementation of universally accessible, high quality, affordable child care services, with substantial direct government funding, for every child in need.

2. The immediate introduction of a Child Care Financing Program to put money into existing day care programs and expand upon the current service.

#### THE PARLIAMENTARY TASK FORCE

The Parliamentary Task Force we are calling for ought to be broad in scope. It should address the multifaceted issue that a majority of Canadians now face daily-- that is the matter of how should a modern society, such as ours, support (in policy and program terms) a commitment to sexual equality, economic well-being and the raising of healthy, happy children.

#### CHILD CARE FINANCING PROGRAM

Our call for a Child Care Financing Program reflects the need to immediately come to terms with the magnitude of the current day care crisis. This is a stop-gap, transitional program which supplements CAP. It creates a precedent for funding day care on a non-restrictive, universal basis. It will help those now associated with day care services and

begin the process of creating new child care spaces and programs.

There are two component parts of this Child Care Financing Program: a Direct Grant to existing licensed spaces and a Child Care Resources Fund for each province and territory.

Our Child Care Financing Program will put \$300 million new Federal dollars into the system in the first year.

The Direct Grant is based on a formula of \$5 per day to every licensed or supervised centre/caregiver for every approved child care place.\* This amount will be increased annually to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index.

The Child Care Resources Fund is based on a formula of \$25 for every child 12 years or younger in each province or territory. Since this is based on a per capita formula it begins to build equity into an evolving child care system. It's a mechanism for putting money into the hands of provincial and territorial governments as long as it is expended on the creation of new public child care programs and facilities. Local and regional groups would apply for the use of this fund. So it brings the question of "what do we need" to the grassroots level.

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\* In some provinces this may include nursery school spaces - providing they are licensed, are eligible for subsidy and function as a child care option for employed or student parents.

We think the construction of day care centres and the bringing of more people into the child care field are priority items in respect to this Fund. We are appalled when we view the outstanding need of Canadian children for care, in light of the high unemployment rates. Further, we are supportive of parents who are "at home" with their children. Proposals for programs which provide opportunities for "at home" parents to enjoy activities with their children would also be eligible for funding under the Child Care Resources Fund.

We are thus calling for new spending powers by the Federal government, while respecting the regulatory role of the provinces.

At the same time, the following conditions shall be applied to the Child Care Financing Program:

- 1) The \$5.00 per day direct grant shall initially be given to all licensed spaces except corporate-chain centres and large commercial centres.
- 2) Small licensed commercial centres shall only be eligible to apply for the direct grant for a transitional period up to 3 years, after which time they are not eligible for the grant unless they have become non-profit centres with a representative board structure.
- 3) Regarding new centres and programs, only non-profit spaces will be eligible for the \$5.00 per day direct grant.
- 4) The Child Care Resources Fund will only be used for non-profit centres and programs.
- 5) All recipients of the Direct Funding Program must meet the licensing regulations of their respective jurisdictions.

The transitional conditions we are calling for reflect our desire to evolve toward a comprehensive public child care system while providing small commercial operators and the users of their services the opportunity to make the adjustments required for ongoing funding. This addresses the needs of users and employees now associated with small commercial centres, and affords small operators, many of whom are low-income women, an opportunity to become a public centre and earn a respectable salary at the centre if they wish.

JOIN THE ASSOCIATION

It's an exciting prospect for the future that together we can work toward proper government funding and an improved, enriched setting for our children.

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Join the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association

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|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--|-------------------|
| \$3 _____            | \$12 _____         | \$20 _____          | \$100 _____  | _____             |
| Individual<br>Member | Day Care<br>Centre | Supporting<br>Group | or more<br>Foundation<br>or Sustain-<br>ing Member | Contri-<br>bution |

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