

## **Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC) Bulletin • Winter 2002-2003**

### **Federal leadership badly needed**

The CCAAC has challenged the federal government to make its Throne Speech commitment to “quality child care” real. How? By showing strong leadership.

This means developing a long-term action plan, allocating substantial funding for child care, and requiring the provinces and territories to spend money specifically on services in this area.

CCAAC Chair, Christine McLean, said advocates welcomed the government’s renewed commitment in the fall Throne Speech to “work with its partners and to increase access to . . . quality child care” and the early learning opportunities this system offers to children.

“The fact that the government used the words ‘quality child care’ in the Throne Speech gives us hope,” McLean said. “What we are looking for now is federal leadership on child care. The government has to put some parameters on how the money that is given to the provinces/territories is spent.”

In its response to the Throne Speech, the CCAAC called on the government to:

- commit to a new five-year action plan for a comprehensive child care system, with at least \$2 billion a year in funding starting in 2003, and maintenance of the cumulative level of funding after the five years;.
- develop a federal-provincial/territorial agreement for an affordable, accessible, regulated, high-quality, non-profit child care system;
- require all provinces and territories to use designated federal funds solely for child care; and
- ensure that provincial/territorial governments work with municipalities and community-based organizations to put in place regionally responsive and accountable child care services.

McLean said child care advocates have been very disappointed by the unevenness of provincial and territorial ECDI investments in child care to date. Some provinces, like Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Manitoba, have used a substantial portion of their allocation for child care. But others, like Ontario, have not put one cent into regulated child care services.

In a letter to Prime Minister Chrétien, she wrote: “We have seen that without . . . firm direction, the precious dollars allocated to ECDI have in some provinces not been used as the spirit of the agreement initially intended.”

In the fall, the CCAAC told the Standing Committee on Finance that “most provinces/territories did not contribute their own dollars or use the federal [ECDI] money to make publicly funded child care a cornerstone of a comprehensive range of supports and services.” The CCAAC and regional representatives who appeared before the committee called on the government to develop a budget that includes money for a universal child care system.

## **Parent Voices**

### **Write a letter for child care now!**

Parent Voices, a two-year parent advocacy project sponsored by the CCAAC, is encouraging parents to make the case to government for a comprehensive child care plan and federal funding for child care programs and services.

“Parents need to let the federal government know that they want the government to make child care a priority,” said Dianne Goldberg, project consultant. Parent Voices recently put together a letter-writing kit for parents to use. The kit is one of a number of useful resources, tools, links and advocacy information available on the project’s web page, [www.childcareadvocacy.ca](http://www.childcareadvocacy.ca).

“There are options for parents to write their own letters or sign prepared ones to Prime Minister Chrétien, Finance Minister John Manley and their MP,” Goldberg said. “We’re asking parents to send a message about what access to high quality, affordable child care means to them and their families.”

Parents and other advocates are also being encouraged to spread the word to others. “The kit can be downloaded, so it can be distributed wherever parents gather,” said Goldberg. “Libraries and schools, and child care, resource and community centres are all good places to either distribute the kit or put an item in a newsletter or on a bulletin board.”

Since its official launch in the spring, Parent Voices has been working on outreach initiatives aimed at creating a pan-Canadian parent network. Contacts with child care groups and parents have already been made in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador, and other regional linkages are in the works. Advocacy tools, briefs, letters, articles, federal and regional activities and contact information can be found on the Parent Voices web page. Check for updates and new resources especially developed for parent advocates as the project work progresses.

Use of the Web pages and the Internet will be the main way the project will help parents come together to develop strategies, share information and learn about breaking child care news. An e-mail broadcast list is being developed for quick dissemination of information.

To be added to the e-mail list, and/or to obtain copies of the letter-writing kit contact: [info@parentvoices.ca](mailto:info@parentvoices.ca). Copies of the kit can also be requested through: CCAAC, 323 Chapel Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7Z2, (613) 594-3196.

*Parent Voices: Making the Case for Child Care is funded by the Social Development Partnerships Program of Human Resources Development Canada.*

## **Quality child care: add your voice**

The CCAAC gives people who support quality child care a means to be part of a collective, credible voice, says the CCAAC's new Chair, Christine McLean.

"People who join us are adding their voice to the strength of the voices around them, and this is a much more effective way to influence change," said McLean. "When you're part of the association, you can be kept up-to-date on the issues and join the debate. And your individual voice becomes much stronger."

McLean became CCAAC Chair in June, after three years on the organization's board, most recently as its secretary. She is an instructor in early childhood education at the College of the North Atlantic in St. John's.

McLean said it's important for the child care advocacy movement to "popularize our message. How to do this will be our challenge in the months to come. We need to look outward and not solely to the child care community."

A key group to include is parents. "They are the voice that policy makers will listen to," said McLean. "As advocates, we want to work together."

## **What we stand for**

The CCAAC is a non-profit, membership-based organization dedicated to promoting quality child care accessible to all.

The CCAAC works for:

- the right of all children to access a child care system supported by public funds;
- a child care system that is comprehensive, accessible, affordable, high quality and non-profit;
- a range of child care services for children 12 and under, including full- and part-time care; group, family, school age, pre-school (nursery school) and in-home care; rural care; care for children with special needs; and culturally sensitive care;
- child care that complements other policies and services for families, including those with a parent at home; and
- improved parental rights and benefits.

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