

## **THE COALITION'S RESPONSE TO THE SOCIAL UNION FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT (SUFA) REVIEW**

*We encourage all advocates to respond to the federal government by October 18th. Read on for all the information you will need to respond.*

### **The Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA)**

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates has prepared this bulletin and attached "backgrounder" to encourage and support all child care advocates to speak up for child care and once again, make it a priority on the federal agenda.

There are lots of ways to do this, but right now we are asking you to respond to the federal government's review of the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA).

**"What's SUFA got to do with child care?"** SUFA is an agreement between the federal, provincial and territorial governments (except Quebec) about how they will cooperate on new social programs in Canada — including social programs for children.

And, the **Early Childhood Development (ECD) Agreement** is the first new social program in Canada signed under the SUFA framework.

After two years of the Early Childhood Development Agreement, the child care community is in the best position to send the federal government a loud and clear message that **SUFA and the resulting ECD Agreement are NOT meeting the needs of children and families across Canada.**

The federal government is conducting its review of SUFA through an on-line consultation. Detailed information about SUFA, the review process and instructions for making submissions are available at [www.sufa-review.ca](http://www.sufa-review.ca). **The deadline for submissions is October 18, 2002, so we ask you to act today!**

The attached **"Backgrounder"** is designed to help you respond to the SUFA review.

It includes:

- A brief description of SUFA, and the promises it makes
- A brief description of the ECD Agreement, and the promises it makes
- Examples of how the ECD reality demonstrates that, once again, the promises are being broken
- Key messages to send the federal government

We hope you use this information to help us tell the federal government that if the SUFA 'promises' of equality and fairness for all are going to be realized — they need to show leadership, accept responsibility and provide adequate funds.

### **BACKGROUNDER**

#### **SUFA Consultation - What does it Mean for Child Care?**

#### **The Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA)**

On February 4, 1999 the Prime Minister and Premiers, with the exception of Quebec\*, signed the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA). This

agreement laid the framework for intergovernmental cooperation in areas such as health, children's services, post secondary education, training, social services, social assistance and aboriginal services.

*\* Quebec did not sign this agreement because it believes that the Agreement "infringes on its constitutional jurisdiction on social matters" but it did receive the federal funds.*

### **Key SUFA Principles**

"Canada's social union should reflect ...fundamental values of Canadians —equality, respect for diversity, fairness, individual dignity and responsibility, and mutual aid and our responsibilities to each other."

### **Some of the promises of the Social Union Framework Agreement**

*"All Canadians are equal:*

- *Treat all Canadians with fairness and equity*
- *Promote equality of opportunity for all Canadians*

*Meeting the needs of Canadians:*

- *Ensure access for all Canadians, wherever they live or move in Canada, to essential social programs and services of reasonably comparable quality*
- *Provide appropriate assistance to those in need*
- *Promote the full and active participation of all Canadians in Canada's social and economic life*
- *Work in partnership with individuals, families, communities, voluntary organizations, business and labour, and ensure appropriate opportunities for Canadians to have meaningful input into social policies and programs*

*Sustaining social programs and services:*

- *Ensure adequate, affordable, stable and sustaining funding for social programs"*

Implementation of the Agreement is coordinated by a cabinet minister from each province/territory and by the federal Ministers of Human Resources Development and of Health (B.C.'s representative is Hon. Murray Coell, Minister of Human Resources).

### **Early Childhood Development Agreement — the first new social program under the SUFA**

In September, 2000, the federal-provincial/territorial governments announced the signing of the **Early Childhood Development Agreement** and the **Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI)**. The federal government negotiated an early childhood policy framework to include four key areas: healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy; parenting and family supports; early childhood development, learning and care; and community supports. Each provincial/territorial government could determine what key areas of the ECDI they wanted to implement and how the federal funds would be spent.

### **The ECDI promises:**

- Federal-provincial/territorial governments agreed to work together to improve and expand early childhood programs and services across the

country.

- With \$2.2 billion federal dollars over five years, the programs and services were to be built on what already existed, and were to become more coordinated and widely available.
- Provincial/territorial governments were to be accountable and report on new activities and expenditures, and on the well-being of young children.

### **The ECD reality:**

The implementation of the ECDI fell short of meeting its objectives, SUFA principles, and meeting the needs of children and families.

- There is no consistent federal-provincial/territorial agreement regarding the components, structures, targets or timelines for what an early childhood system will ensure for all children and their families.
- The provincial/territorial governments are not required to spend any of the ECDI funds on supporting and improving regulated child care. While the research affirms that child care must be the cornerstone of an early childhood system, not all provinces are using these funds for child care. The majority of Canadian families continue to face a patchwork of programs/services depending upon their needs, where they live, and their socio economic status.
- Poverty is a major problem in our country with approximately 1 out of every 5 children living below the poverty line and access to high quality child care would be a key component of an effective anti-poverty strategy.
- While at least 65% of all children have mothers who are in the paid labour force, the current cost of regulated child care is unaffordable for the majority of families. Spaces are limited and only 10% of all children have access to regulated child care. The very children who could most benefit from access to enriched experiences are least likely to receive them.
- The federal ECDI funds are inadequate and there is no commitment to sustain the funding after the five years.
- The reporting requirements are vague and the existing provincial/territorial reports do not ensure public accountability.

### **Our Key Messages to the Federal Government**

You can participate in the on-line consultation at

**[www.sufa-review.ca](http://www.sufa-review.ca)**

Deadline for submissions is October 18, 2002.

### **The Social Union Framework and the Early Childhood Development Agreement are not meeting the child care needs of Canada's children and families. Tell the federal government that it's time to:**

- make a substantial investment and commit to a 5 year action plan to develop a comprehensive child care system with a new expenditure of at least \$2 billion in year one, and a further \$500 million in each of the following four years, for a total of \$4 billion annually by 2008/09.
- develop targets and timelines and require all provinces/territories to use the designated federal funds for building a comprehensive child care system that entitles all children access to high quality, affordable, regulated child care in their communities.

- require that the provincial/territorial governments work with the municipalities and community organizations to plan and implement regionally responsive child care services.
- implement a process by which the provinces/territories are required to be publicly accountable, to provide detailed progress reports, and to ensure opportunities for community review and input.