

October 27, 2004

**An Open Letter to Honourable Ken Dryden, Minister of Social Development,
and the Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Child Care:**

During the last federal election, the now-governing Liberal Party committed to introduce a 'Quebec-style' child care system across Canada. This was welcome news for Canada's children, and certainly long overdue. Canada's economy is strong, we continue to have a steady stream of budget surpluses, and we can well afford this important social initiative.

We expect you to enter into the November 1 and 2 meetings with the leadership, vision and commitment to bring home a pan-Canadian child care plan.

We represent a range of individuals, groups and organizations from coast to coast to coast working together to ensure that, this time, the federal election promise on child care is fulfilled. As you know, many of us have been advocating for over 20 years for a universal, publicly funded system that will provide all children in Canada with access to high quality early learning and child care experiences.

Our advocacy is substantiated by research that shows that a universal approach to quality child care promotes healthy child development at the same time as it supports families and their workforce participation, reduces child poverty, advances women's equality, deepens social inclusion and builds a knowledge-based economy.

While the research is clear, international comparisons indicate that, outside of Quebec, Canada's investment in child care is less than most other developed countries. It's high time to act.

The Canadian public agrees. A 2002 national study of public attitudes showed that 90% of Canadians think we should have a nationally coordinated child care system, and 89% agree that quality child care is essential to Canada's prosperity. (*Canadian Child Care Federation and Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada*).

That's why we're seeking a strong "Commitment to Action", with clear and measurable outcomes, in these federal/provincial/territorial meetings. First, we expect all participants to support the development of a legislative framework for child care that enshrines the five key principles of quality, universality, accessibility, developmental programming and inclusion. We also need to see a timetable for the introduction of this legislative framework.

Furthermore, we expect agreement on a plan of prompt action that clearly demonstrates:

1. A fundamental shift from the current user fee and subsidy system to one that is publicly funded from general revenues derived from taxes, as in Quebec and other developed countries around the world. Research shows that publicly funded systems, with low, affordable user fees, are the most effective way to achieve the outcomes reflected in the five key principles.
2. A separate, dedicated funding stream for the new federal transfer to the provinces and territories, with sufficient and stable funding commitments to support the implementation of a publicly funded system.
3. A requirement that existing funding commitments under the ECD and Multilateral Agreements are maintained.
4. A requirement that provinces and territories maintain or increase their own child care funding, so that federal funds are used to supplement and build the system, not to replace provincial or territorial contributions to child care.
5. Provincial and territorial accountability tied to plans, with timelines and targets, for using federal child care funds to build a universal, publicly funded system. This requirement recognizes that provinces and territories will develop their own priorities and related plans, while it confirms that these plans must move us towards a publicly funded system. Given the leadership role that Quebec has played to date, its autonomy can and should be recognized and respected through this process.
6. A commitment to a transition plan that moves to public and/or not-for-profit delivery of child care services. Public and not-for-profit delivery promotes accountable and stable community-based services, mitigates the risk of trade challenges, and allows limited public resources to maximize quality and developmental programming.

We believe that this Commitment to Action should form the foundation of a publicly funded, pan-Canadian child care system. Achieving such a system won't be easy. Strong leadership and collaboration will be required at all levels of government and throughout the community to ensure that all children in Canada have access to quality child care. However there is strong public support for such action.

We caution against further delay, study, indecision and disagreement that will result in one more missed opportunity. As Minister Dryden has said in meetings, 'the debate is over; now is the time for action'.

We expect your Commitment to Action and stand ready to assist with this transformation.

27 octobre 2004

Lettre ouverte à l'honorable Ken Dryden, ministre du Développement social et aux ministres provinciaux et territoriaux responsables des services de garde à l'enfance :

Lors de la dernière élection fédérale, le gouvernement libéral élu s'est engagé à instaurer par tout le Canada un système de services de garde à l'enfance s'inspirant du modèle québécois. La nouvelle était de bonne augure pour les enfants du Canada et attendue depuis longtemps. L'économie canadienne est forte, nos surplus budgétaires se consolident au fil des ans et nous avons manifestement les moyens d'une initiative sociale de cette importance.

Nous nous attendons à ce que vous amorciez les rencontres du 1^{er} et 2 novembre prochain avec la vision, la volonté et le leadership requis pour nous doter d'un plan pancanadien en matière de services de garde à l'enfance.

Nous représentons des individus, des groupes et des organisations de toutes les régions du pays qui travaillent ensemble pour faire en sorte que, cette fois-ci, la promesse électorale afférente aux services de garde soit bel et bien tenue. Comme vous le savez, nous sommes nombreux et nombreuses à réclamer depuis plus de vingt ans un système de services de garde universels et financé par l'État afin que tous les enfants au Canada aient accès à des services éducatifs et de garde à l'enfance de bonne qualité.

Nos revendications s'appuient sur des recherches démontrant que l'universalité en matière de services de garde de qualité contribue au développement harmonieux des enfants tout en soutenant les familles et leur participation au marché du travail, en réduisant les niveaux de pauvreté infantile, en favorisant l'égalité des femmes, en renforçant l'intégration sociale et en bâtissant une économie fondée sur le savoir.

Quoique la recherche soit claire, des comparaisons internationales révèlent que les investissements du Canada (excluant ceux du Québec) en matière de services de garde sont inférieurs à ceux de la plupart des autres pays industrialisés. Le temps est venu d'agir.

Et la population canadienne est d'accord. Une étude pancanadienne réalisée en 2002 sur les attitudes du public a révélé que 90 % de la population pensait que le Canada devait se doter d'un système national et coordonné de services de garde à l'enfance; 89 % estimait qu'il était essentiel de se doter de services de garde de bonne qualité pour assurer la prospérité du Canada (Fédération canadienne des services de garde à l'enfance et Association canadienne pour la promotion des services de garde à l'enfance).

C'est pour cette raison que nous attendons de cette rencontre fédérale-provinciale-territoriale un *engagement ferme d'agir* de votre part à tous et des résultats clairs et mesurables. Premièrement, nous nous attendons à ce que tous les participants appuient l'élaboration d'un cadre législatif enchâssant les cinq principes fondamentaux suivants : qualité, universalité, accessibilité, développement et intégration. Nous tenons également à ce que soit adopté le calendrier de mise en œuvre de ce cadre législatif.

De plus, nous nous attendons à ce qu'il y ait entente autour d'un plan d'action rapide comportant:

1. Un changement fondamental d'approche, à savoir le remplacement du modèle utilisateur-payeur actuel et du système de subventions par un système financé par l'État à même ses recettes fiscales, comme c'est le cas au Québec et dans d'autres pays au monde. La recherche démontre que les systèmes financés à même les fonds publics et assortis de frais aux usagers peu élevés et abordables sont la façon la plus efficace d'atteindre les résultats incarnés par les cinq grands principes.
2. Une voie distincte de financement pour les nouveaux transferts fédéraux aux provinces et territoires, avec l'engagement d'y affecter des montants soutenus et suffisants pour appuyer la mise en œuvre d'un système financé à même les fonds publics.
3. Une obligation de maintenir les engagements financiers existants en vertu de l'EDPE et des accords multilatéraux.
4. Une obligation faite aux provinces et territoires de maintenir ou d'accroître leurs propres investissements en services de garde de façon à ce que les fonds fédéraux servent à compléter et bâtir le système et non à remplacer les dépenses des provinces et territoires dans le domaine.
5. Une obligation faite aux provinces et territoires de rendre compte – au moyen de plans d'action, d'échéanciers et d'objectifs – de l'utilisation des fonds fédéraux destinés à l'instauration d'un système universel et financé à même les fonds publics. Cette obligation reconnaît le fait que les provinces et territoires adopteront leurs propres priorités et stratégies, mais confirment que ces stratégies devront ouvrir la voie à un système financé à même les fonds publics. Étant donné le rôle de leadership dont a fait preuve le Québec sur ces questions à ce jour, son autonomie peut et doit être reconnue et respectée tout au long du processus.
6. Un engagement à l'égard d'un plan de transition qui permettrait d'adopter des modes de prestation public ou sans but lucratif. En effet, ces modes de prestation favorisent le développement de services de garde communautaires, responsables et stables, ils atténuent le risque de contestations commerciales et ils font en sorte que les fonds publics limités dont on dispose servent à maximaliser la qualité des soins et des programmes éducatifs.

Nous croyons que cet *engagement ferme d'agir* devrait servir de fondement à un système pancanadien de services de garde à l'enfance financés à même les deniers publics. La réalisation d'un système de cette nature ne se fera pas en un simple tour de main. Il faudra qu'à tous les échelons de gouvernement et dans l'ensemble du milieu on fasse preuve de leadership et d'esprit de collaboration pour que tous les enfants au Canada aient accès à des services de garde de qualité. Cependant, la population appuie fermement des actions en ce sens.

Nous vous mettons en garde d'éviter les reports, les nouvelles études, les tergiversations et les désaccords, lesquels ne résulteraient, une fois de plus, qu'en une autre occasion ratée. Pour citer les propos du ministre Dryden dans diverses rencontres : « Le débat est clos; le temps est venu d'agir ».

Dans l'attente de votre *engagement ferme d'agir*, nous sommes plus prêts que jamais à vous aider à apporter les changements attendus.

List of Signatures

Open Letter to Honourable Ken Dryden, Minister of Social Development, and the Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Child Care

Organizations signing the Open Letter

Debra Mayer, Child Care Advocacy Association, Ottawa
Kira Heineck, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
Sharon Hope Irwin, SpecialLink, N.S.
Kismet Lowrie, Yukon Child Care Association
Paul Moist, Canadian Union of Public Employees
Janis Douglas, Canadian Association for Community Living
Jamie Kass, Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Child Care Coordinator
British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union
British Columbia Federation of Labour
Jenny Robinson, YWCA Canada
Denise Norman, Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada- Ontario Region
Martha Friendly, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto
Gay Pagan, Manitoba Government and General Employees Union
Lesley Turner, Canadian Union of Public Workers
Pat Wege and Board of Directors, Manitoba Child Care Association
Laurel Rothman, Campaign 2000
Penni Richmond, Canadian Labour Congress
Kim Fry, Ontario Coalition for Social Justice
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
George Soule, Canadian Federation of Students
Larry Depoe, Association du Personnel Cadre des CPE du Quebec
Jane Wilson & Carol Gott, Rural Voices, Longbow Lake, ON
The Public Service Alliance of Canada
Kirk Mark, Antiracist Multicultural Education Network of Ontario
Ontario Women's Health Network
Siobhan Roantree, Ontario NDP Women's Committee
Louise Woodfine, Community Services Council, NL
Susan Colley, Integration Network, Institute of Child Study, Toronto, ON
Lise Martin, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (Institut canadien de recherche sur les femmes)
National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada
School Age Child Care Association of BC,
First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
Buzz Hargrove, Canadian Auto Workers Union
Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre, BC
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Lee Lakeman, Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres
Kairos: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives/ Initiatives oecuméniques canadiennes pour la justice, ON
Greg deGroot-Maggetti, Citizens for Public Justice, ON
Joanne Morris, Child Care Human Resource Sector Council

Others

Sheri Hincks, Parent Advisory Council, University of Guelph, ON
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Pat Frouws, SFU Childcare Society, Burnaby, BC
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Suzanne Power-Hann, Darthmouth Day Care Centre
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Bonnie McGill, Campbell River, BC
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Lucy Quaglia, Moore Place Day Care, Georgetown, ON
Lesley Carter, Primary School Teacher, Nanaimo, BC
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Karen Rentschler; Alexis Whitworth; Showna Chalmers; Wendy Fetchko
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Avi Goldberg, Vancouver BC
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Mab Oloman, Vancouver, BC
Michael Goldberg, Vancouver BC
Ed Conroy, Castlegar, BC
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Trista Thompson, Trail, BC
Kathy Rae, Campbell River, BC
Kevin Park, Coquitlam, BC
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Maria Cordeiro, Owen Community Learning Centre
Colin Hughes, Community Worker, Children's Aid Society of Toronto
Kelly-Anne Meadus
Jackie Stevens, Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
Rosemary LoCurto, Placement Student for Campaign 2000
Nicolette Roy, Windsor
Stacey Andrews
Kim Benson

Debbie Kindler, Stratford, ON
Pat Schulz Child Care Centre, Toronto, ON
Diane Dobusz, Toronto, ON
Dorothy McKenna, Coordinator of Womanspace Resource Centre
Lesley Frank, Instructor of Sociology, Acadia University of Sociology
Carolyn Muise
Barbara Yazdani
Kathleen Wren
Carmen Reid, Big Brothers, Big Sisters Of CornerBrook, NL
Jane Lane
Gillian Janes, St. John's, NF
Francine Maher
Jan Foley, Women in Resource Development Committee, Educational Resource Centre
Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Vancouver, BC
Ottawa Federation of Parent's Day Care Centres
Dalhousie Parent's Day Care Centre, Ottawa, ON
Cindy Magloughlin, Ottawa, ON
Maureen Duncan, CEO, United Way of Greater of Victoria, BC
Roxanne L. Still, Ph.D Regional Mental Health Consultant, Victoria, BC
Irmajean Bajnok, Acting ED, Registered Nurses Association of Toronto, ON
Maryann Bird, Ottawa, ON
Hummingburde Child Care Centre: Margaret McGarry, Nicki Bezanson,
Marie-Anne Vogels, Tana Cole, Lorna Neuwirth, Lisa Morgan, Kathy Waddell,
Cathy Lidstrom
Linda McDaniels, BC