



Standing Committee on Education

September 29, 2012

Our speaker, Martha Friendly, a child care expert, founder and Executive Director of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit at the University of Toronto, spoke of her vision of child care. Martha spoke about the Ontario situation because conditions in childcare vary across the country. CFUW has been working on this issue since the 1970s and Martha outlined a vision for a mature system in place by 2020. Martha outlined how we needed to design a system. To do that, you must design a vision statement that describes the mature system you envisage. You must state a purpose, a rationale for your vision, and the principles on which it is based. You must outline your goals, the desired outcomes for the children, their families, women and the economy.

Some of these purposes are

1. To enable more women to participate into the workforce
2. Child development: preparation for schooling, to support learning and development
3. Others such as alleviate poverty, women's equality or women's rights, the economy, human capital, local labour force, societal goals such as social inclusion and anti crime, children's right to education and, a fair share of resources.

She mentioned the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which has had a poor reception at the UN

She wants to design a system that does not see early Childhood Education (ECE) as a market for profit and under license. A system works because it ensures accessible and quality childcare, a quality that will be the norm not the exception. ECE is a provincial responsibility. She thinks it should be like medicare which provides for provincial adaptation.

Her vision of child care is one that moves from the current market system to one that is an integrated, high quality, universal system She compared the current market model and her envisioned system as follows:

Market	System
Private family matter	Public system
Privately developed private services	Public management, Public services
Responds to demand	Planned
Fee for service, community based	Entitlement, public finances
Demand side/public funds	Supply side financing

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Integration/split

More integration

Childcare

Education like kindergarten

Vision 2020 is about where we want to be in 2020, moving from here to there, from market to system being our long term goals. ECE would then be part of a sustained, well resourced system in all communities in all parts of Canada with reasonable access for all social classes, fully including children with disabilities and with diversity respected. There would be options for parents. ECE would be non-compulsory, centre based family childcare, full or part time, with reasonably flexible hours. It would provide multifunctional seamless services, care in parents' absence and family support, at the same time, Kindergarten, nursery school, a family resource. It would be available to at home parents as well as working ones. It would charge fees but they would be affordable. It would be a publicly funded program and not one of subsidies, vouchers or cheques as is the case now. These funds would come from the federal as well as provincial governments to the local ECE. It would be a public good, not a private commodity. In 2020 ECE would be a planned, publicly managed system, run by local school boards or municipal governments, not run by parents or volunteers but by professionals. It would be a public service, not a business, with democratic participation by parents. High quality would be consistent and no longer sporadic.

In 2020 ECE kids would have fun, make friends, learn new things and focus on social, intellectual, emotional and creative opportunities. Education would be play based, non didactic, staffed by high quality, respected ECE educators with a living wage and good working conditions to reflect the value of their work.

Some of the quality issues parents face now are: food, lack of outdoor activity, the lack of male teachers. Often ECE takes place in left over spaces rather than a space designed with their needs in mind. In vision 2020, the physical environment would be comfortable, peaceful, homelike, with good equipment and program materials easily accessible to children.

Currently, Canada is at the absolute bottom of countries studied by the OECD in ECE.

What is the remedy: Advocate!

1. Partner with like minded community groups in your community.
2. Read the Pascal report or the Early Years 3 report. Six other provinces provide ECE under the auspices of their Ministry of Education. The difficult state of the economy made implementing the Pascal report difficult, so the extended childcare he envisaged is not now available. Issues need to be resolved with current child care providers. Child care is an important issue addressing issues of poverty, women's freedom to work, and children's rights to be safe and in good care.
3. Highlight Child Care as an issue for your Advocacy in your clubs.

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