



Canadian Federation of University Women
ONTARIO COUNCIL



**Building Child Care Networks
For
Healthy Ontario Communities**

Ontario Council

Canadian Federation of University Women

February 2013

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Dear Ontario Council CFUW Presidents

Last September, the provincial government sent out a paper on the Modernization of Child Care requesting feedback from many organizations. Ontario Council CFUW submitted a document through the efforts of Wendy Taylor. This document can be found on the OC website.

I would like to thank Wendy Taylor, Ontario Council CFUW Advisor on Child Care Issues for the research and preparation of this recent *Toolkit for Building a Network of Organizations* to address the issue of Child Care in our Ontario communities.

Clubs and individual members are asked to lend your voices and take action on this very important issue in whatever way deemed possible for your club. Through concerted efforts of the 55 clubs in Ontario, we can first raise awareness and educate our members, and our community partners. The next step is working together with those partners to find solutions that work in your community.

Thank you for your consideration to be involved in this advocacy.

Sincerely,

Brenda

Brenda Robertson
President Ontario Council
CFUW

Child Care in Ontario

The Issue: Closing and Under Funding of Regulated Child Care Centres in Urban, Rural and Northern Ontario Centres.

Regulated non-profit child care in Ontario is presently funded by the provincial, municipal and federal governments under the Day Nurseries Act and the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act.¹

At a time when most child care centres have growing waiting lists, over 100 communities in Ontario are currently under threat of closing due to a funding shortfall. Over 20,000 children are on waiting lists in Toronto alone.²

Rural areas in Northern Ontario have unique and different needs for regulated child care centres. As many rural areas are farming communities, the access to limited child care centres is a concern. Childcare is often required for farming parents who work outside the nine-to-five workday. Childcare programs that respond to the seasonal cycles and hours of farming for example must be considered.³

Rural centres are more vulnerable to closures due to smaller populations, larger geographical regions and a decline in young families.

Rural centres also have a more difficult time of attracting and maintaining qualified staff. Pay scales are generally lower even though the cost of living is less than an urban area, the wage differentials are sufficiently large to deter early childhood educators from settling in these areas.⁴

Over 80% of Canadians live in urban areas.⁵ Urban areas do not face the same geographical challenges. However, large cities such as Toronto and Hamilton have a greater diversity of ethnic cultures and larger areas of low-income families, creating different challenges for child care centres.

All Day Learning Implementation in all Ontario Communities

The Government of Ontario has recently introduced All Day Learning as a result of the research done by Dr. Charles Pascal. Early learning education for 4 & 5 year olds is to be fully implemented into the Ontario education system by 2015 – 16.

For both rural and urban areas in Ontario, the implementation of the All Day Learning has made an impact on the regulated child care system in Ontario. Although urban areas do not face the same geographical challenges as rural areas, the economic impact of losing the 4 and 5 year olds to All Day Learning has created a strain on revenues, as centres must retrofit their space to accommodate babies and toddlers. These spaces are the most resource intensive and expensive spaces to create and maintain.

The original intention of providing both before and after school care has not happened. Parents are still paying for before and after school care and child care centres are still being asked to provide such care on a short term basis, often

¹ *(Modernizing Child Care in Ontario, Ontario Gov't 2012)*

² CUPE Ontario, www.CUPE.on.ca February 2013

³ Rural Ontario Municipal Association, A Voice for Rural and Northern Ontario, 2011

⁴ On the teeter-totter: Licensed child care in rural, northern, and remote Ontario May 2011

⁵ Bringing Cities to the Table: Child Care and Intergovernmental Relations, Jane Jenson and Rianne Mahon, 2002 Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.

having to hire part time care workers. The financial burden is left to the child care centre and the parents to pay for a service they thought would be absorbed by the school boards.

Both urban and rural areas have lost a significant number of Early Childhood Educators to the School Boards when All Day Learning started and this will continue as the full implementation expands into 2015-16. The reason for this loss is better remuneration, and benefits for educators in the school boards.

As you can observe from the following chart, a child care centre requires more staffing for infants and toddlers. The 4 and 5 year olds subsidized the more expensive care of the infants and toddlers. The older children require less supervision, thus creating revenue for the child care centre because the numbers are higher. These children have been lost to the centre through All Day Learning.

NUMBER OF STAFF REQUIRED FOR A DAY NURSERY OTHER THAN A DAY NURSERY FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN⁶

Age of Children in Group	Ratio of Employees to Children	Maximum Number of Children in Group
1. Under 18 months of age	3 to 10	10
2. 18 months of age and over up to and including 30 months of age	1 to 5	15
3. More than 30 months of age up to and including 5 years of age	1 to 8	16
4. 44 months of age or over and up to and including 67 months of age as of August 31 of the year	1 to 10	20
5. 56 months of age or over and up to and including 67 months of age as of August 31 of the year	1 to 12	24
6. 68 months of age or over as of August 31 of the year and up to and including 12 years of age	1 to 15	30

Child Care and Your Community

Every one of us as members of the Canadian Federation of University Women in Ontario strive and work hard to advocate for each community we live in. Many of our clubs are strong advocates for the homeless, the single mother, poverty issues that continue to burden Ontario, the older youth in foster care, etc....

The common factor in all of these issues is our young children and the appropriate care they receive in their formative years. We all have a responsibility to care for our communities.

We need to work together to keep our child care centres open through adequate funding as well as increase the number of spaces, so families do not have to turn to a non-regulated, for profit child care centre.

Children develop many of their social patterns within the first few years of their lives. If they must have care outside of the home, early learning, provided by Early Childhood Educators will help them establish strong foundations that they

⁶ (Day Nurseries Act for Child Care Supervisors in Ontario, <http://childcarelearning.on.ca>)

can build on when they transfer to school. Although a benefit to all children who attend a regulated child care centre in Ontario, this is a key component for a child living in poverty. An educated society is one building block to a strong economic future to any community and Ontario.

Quality, affordable, non-profit regulated child care in our communities supports families.

Parents are able to work and know their children are well cared for by qualified, reliable staff.

When parents are able to go to work and support their families they are not a burden on the social network of the community. They pay more income taxes.

Parents receiving a living wage are able to support the local economy through purchase of goods.

Children who attend quality child care centres are more likely to be healthier, are less likely to be placed in special education classes due to prior screenings, graduate from high school and go onto post-secondary education.⁷

Child Care helps communities remain competitive and attractive to businesses and other professionals such as doctors, dentists, etc. When child care centres close, the community becomes less attractive to younger professionals.

Licensed child care in farm communities protects the safety of children by keeping them in safe, supervised environments. When licensed child care providers close, parents may sometimes have no choice but to leave children at home unsupervised, near heavy machinery and dangerous farm implements.⁸

As you can ascertain from the above facts, our communities are healthier when we support young families. When we help the young single mother access affordable quality child care for her young baby, we help her continue her education so she can become self-sufficient and less reliant on social supports such as food banks, Ontario Works, the hospital, or women's shelters.

Regulated, accessible, affordable child care is a win win for all of us. We need to make certain that we support our families through advocating for child care in our community.

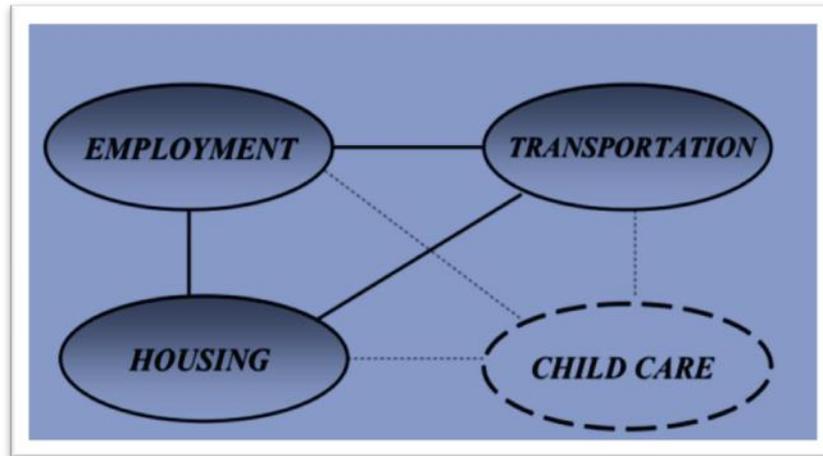
⁷ (*Child care and community development* by Kristen Anderson & Ellen Dektar, *Local Investment in Child Care (LINCC)*, April 2010)

⁸ . On the teeter-totter: Licensed child care in rural, northern, and remote Ontario May 2011

Community Planning and Development

We need to encourage our community that regulated non-profit child care, needs to be part of community planning, sustainability and economic development.⁹

Advocate with local developers and city councillors for new housing developments to be family friendly. New schools should be built with child care centres attached so parents have easy access to both so that school aged children do not require a long walk or bus ride for before and after school care.



Child care is our society's signal that we really value children. Without a strong commitment to child care, we undermine not only our children's future but our community's strength.

— Paul Dewar, MP, speaking at Glebe Parents' Day Care, April 21, 2011

⁹ (*Child care and community development* by Kristen Anderson & Ellen Dektar, *Local Investment in Child Care (LINCC)*, April 2010)

Call to Action! Building a Child Care Network for your Community

The purpose of this project will be to reach out to all of our community partners we think should be part of the child care network for our community. Be the **leaders** in your community to bring this issue to the forefront.

The following list was produced by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care – November 2012.

www.childcareontario.org

Local Community Representatives:

- Mayor & City Councillors
- Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP)
- School Board Trustees
- Local City Social Services Staff – Ontario Works, Children’s Aid etc.
- Legal clinics
- Women’s shelters and anti-poverty organizations
- Parent groups – drop-in centres, mom’s groups, etc.
- Labour council (CUPE, CAW, OECTA, OSSTF, ETFO, other unions)
- Business community
- Organizations for children with special needs
- Faith groups
- Youth groups or Student Association (colleges and universities)
- University and/or College Students, Faculty etc.

Method of Engaging the Community Network and each CFUW Club:

Visit local child care centres and interview the Executive Director about the issues that their centre is experiencing. Each centre is a different. Identify CFUW and the advocacy work we do for the betterment of our communities. Discuss the options for helping them reach their goals and how your CFUW club can be of assistance.

Your CFUW Club could **host a public information session** concerning child care in the community. This meeting could be held at a local regulated child care centre. The focus of this public meeting would be how to work together at building a healthy community through affordable, accessible child care.

Organizations such as women’s shelters, local businesses, children with special needs, or families struggling to secure child care in a regulated centre could be invited to talk collectively about their individual issues and concerns with child care. Local MPP, Mayor and council members should be invited to provide their input and to listen to concerns.

Invite a speaker who is knowledgeable about child care in Ontario or your community

Prepare for the public information meeting:¹⁰

State the problem clearly and concisely.

Who is affected by the child care situation in your community?

Why address this issue at this time?

Is intervention needed at this time before there are negative consequences?

How are children, families, and the community being affected at this time?

Provide local data to emphasize how the problem is affecting the community?

Form a focus group of representatives who share our concerns about child care. This can be an informal meeting held around a board room table. Focus groups can provide useful information about attitudes re child care and other community concerns that are related. These are useful to form relationships and commit individuals to perform the action necessary to advocate for child care in our Ontario communities.

Before the next Provincial election **host an all candidates** meeting for the public to hear about each party's platform on child care in Ontario and your community.

Write editorials on child care to the local newspaper.

Meet with local MPP about child care in your community and discuss the significance of looking after families for a healthier community.

Become part of the council committee for the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care.

Use all the media sources that you have access too, to advertise your issue or event – Local and regional newspapers, Local TV, Facebook, Radio, and your CFUW club web site.

Educate the public and bring about public awareness.

Tell your neighbours!

¹⁰ www.ounceofprevention.org/advocacy/pdfs/EarlyChildhoodAdvocacyToolkit.pdf

Resources:

The following organizations and web sites are places to find out more information on child care in Ontario

People for Education - www.peopleforeducation.ca

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care - www.childcareontario.org

Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy- www.children.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Education - www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/

CUPE - www.cupe.on.ca/s315/save-child-care-ontario

Early Childhood Advocacy Toolkit – Ounce of Prevention Fund - www.ounceofprevention.org

Media Sources – Local Paper, Regional Paper, Facebook, Radio and Local TV.

Your communities regulated Child Care Centre(s)

See next page for sample letter for your event

Sample Letter or E-Mail to Child Care Information Meeting

Your Clubs Letterhead if sending out as a letter.

Date

Name and Title

Address

Dear,

The Ontario Council of the Canadian Federation of University Women is composed of 55 clubs comprised of graduates living in urban and rural areas across Ontario. We are non-partisan, non-sectarian and we are totally member funded. Our members are active in public affairs, advocating on public education, justice, health and environmental issues as well as the status of women and human rights. Ontario Council is part of the Canadian Federation of University Women and has links to the International Federation of University Women.

Our local club of CFUW, part of the Ontario Council, established in----- has -----members. We are advocates for our community and have worked on such issues as-----.

Of great concern to our membership is the health of our community. We believe that healthy communities benefit all of us. A large component of a healthy community is creating a strong foundation for our children and families. We have a strong conviction that taking care of our young children in regulated child care centres, staffed by qualified, educated Early Childhood Educators is one of the building blocks to a community that is stronger economically and socially.

Our regulated child care centres are under threat of underfunding and have long waiting lists for parents who require quality care for their children so they may participate in the work force or complete their education.

CFUW (Your Club) is holding an information event on the value of quality, affordable, accessible child care in our community. The event will be held at (Your Chosen Location) on (The Date) at (Time).

We would like you to be part of this event, because of your (Interest or qualification). A variety of related organizations will be attending this information gathering event. This will be an opportunity for all of us to work together to better child care in our community and help our families and children succeed.

We look forward to seeing you. Please RSVP to ----- or e-mail-----

Regards,