



Canadian Federation of University Women
ONTARIO COUNCIL



Proposal for Ontario Early Learning and Child Care System

March 2013

By the

**Working Group on
Early Learning and Child Care**

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Dear Ontario Council CFUW Presidents,

The September OC Education Standing Committee hosted a panel of experts to begin the conversation and raise awareness about the need for affordable, accessible, quality Child Care for the province of Ontario.

I would like to thank Margaret McGovern, Chair of the Working Group on Early Learning and Child Care and the committee members for their tireless work in researching and preparing Toolkit #2 Proposal for Early Learning and Child Care System for Ontario.

As in any campaign, Ontario Council CFUW clubs need different strategies to take an issue forward. The first step is to accept the challenge and then decide with your members how your club can get involved in your community. Be ready to seize unanticipated opportunities to share the message along with your planned advocacy action.

With your efforts, we can think and speak of our goal as being already achieved.

Sincerely,
Brenda

Brenda Robertson
President Ontario Council
CFUW

CFUW and Early Learning/Child Care – Our History

The Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) has been advocating for universal and affordable early learning and childcare for many years. In 2006, it passed the following resolution:

“That CFUW reaffirm its existing policy and urge the Government of Canada to give priority to the creation of a quality, universally accessible and comprehensive early learning and child care program which emphasizes the development of the whole child. Funding for this initiative should involve all levels of government through cost-sharing mechanisms, as in other human services such as health, education, and social programs.”

At the initiative of the CFUW Ontario Council Toronto clubs, the national CFUW Board of Directors reaffirmed the commitment of the organization to these goals at their Annual General Meeting in 2011. All clubs across the country were urged to work together to make early learning and child care a national focus. Since the provision of early learning and child care is primarily a provincial responsibility, it was decided that each province would develop its own campaign to move the issue forward on the political agenda.

What is the Toronto Caucus? The Toronto Caucus is representative of the six clubs in Toronto. The Early Learning and Child Care initiative arose from a concern about the growing gap between rich and poor in Toronto. Advocating around housing and employment insurance preceded the decision to focus on Early Learning and Child Care as a solution to poverty issues as well as recognizing the importance of such a program to the overall well-being of our communities.

In Ontario, the Working Group, comprised of CFUW Toronto clubs has taken the lead on Early Learning and Child Care with support from Ontario Council and member clubs. The Resource materials are being circulated to all Ontario Council CFUW clubs to assist you in your efforts to educate your members and your community about this issue. A provincial election may happen at any time. We offer this as a tool for a province-wide initiative of CFUW Ontario.

Members of the Toronto Caucus who participated in preparing this proposal: Avery Fleming (Etobicoke), Barbara Falby (Toronto), Linda Sheppard (North Toronto), Joan Briant (East York/Leaside), Karen Edson, Anne Gilbert, Margaret McGovern (North York), Gail Doehler, Catherine Molyneux (Scarborough).

Ontario Council CFUW

Working Group on Early Learning and Child Care

Our Proposal: That the provincial government commit to the development and implementation of a province-wide public system of early learning and child care. A system that is..

- **accessible to all families**
- **affordable**
- **high quality**
- **publicly funded and managed**
- **public and non-profit**

Why a public system of early learning and child care in Ontario?

There are many compelling reasons....

1. Much more than baby-sitting...

- a growing body of research demonstrates the importance of high quality early learning in the years from birth to four
- "By the time a child sets foot in kindergarten, much about her future life has already been set in motion....Evidence is mounting that what happens in the first four years of life can be critical to long-term well-being." ¹
- investing in quality programs can contribute to a child's chances of success as well as being a wise investment by society in maximizing the potential of all its citizens. ²

¹ "Unlocking Our Potential: Life's early years might be be even more important than we thought" Alison Motluk. U of T Magazine. Summer 2011

² "While Canadians remain ambivalent about the appropriate types of the amount of public support for families with young children, our contemporaries in the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – the world's richest countries – have changed the discussion from the need to mind the children of working parents , to stimulating all children. Driven by the massive body of research that points to the importance of the early years for future health, behaviour and learning, they have invested heavily in early childhood programs, largely by including younger children in public education." Early Years: Study 3. McCain, Mustard, McCuaig. Margaret & Wallace McCain

- Ontario is short-changing its future and that of its children by under-investing in quality early learning programs for all families.
- high quality early learning and child care should be a right for all families and their children; yet in the provision of quality, accessible childcare, a UNICEF report card ranked Canada last of 25 industrialized countries..tied with Ireland ³

2. An investment with good returns...

- recent research by reputable institutions like the TD Bank shows the many positives to the economy and society for every dollar invested in child care
- for society, one article notes that “for every dollar spent on children during their first years of life, anywhere from \$2 to \$17 will be saved on future spending down the road, depending on the group of children and the type of programs and services.” ⁴
- for the economy, the same article notes: “On a more macro level, the economic contribution of mothers with pre-school children to the Canadian economy is estimated to be \$53 billion annually, or 5% of the GDP.” and that was in 2005.⁵
- economist Robert Fairholm reports that “every dollar invested in child care increases GDP by \$2.30” ⁶
- TD Bank Chief Economist, Craig Alexander said recently about childcare, “It is very much an economic topic. If you are concerned with skills development, productivity, and innovation, you really should care about this subject.”⁷

Family Foundation. Toronto. 2011, pg. 15. The study is available online for download at <http://earlyyearsstudy.ca/download-early-years-study-3/> .

³ “TAKE MY KIDS, PLEASE.” Naomi Buck. Toronto Life. October, 2012

⁴ “A Compelling Case for Investing in Children.” paper published by the Ont. Municipal Social Services Assoc. May 2005, pg. 3. This is available online at <http://www.omssa.com/lib/db2file.asp?fileid=35350>

⁵ Same as above, pg 4.

⁶ See the following article for this and more on the economic benefits of investing in child care. “The Scrooges in Canada are stealing our kids’ Christmas...” Ed Finn. CCPA Monitor. www.policyalternatives.ca Dec. 2012/Jan. 2013.

⁷ quoted in “TD Economist says child care should be a top spending priority for governments after deficits eliminated” Toronto Star. Nov. 26, 2012. Available online at

- his report says “Given the unquestionable number of benefits that early childhood education can provide, it follows that more focus should be put on investing in and improving the system.”⁸

3. Yet, regulated child care spaces are in very short supply...

- publicly funded, high quality, public or non-profit child care is very limited in Ontario
- only 1 in 5 children has access to a regulated child care centre
- 4 out of 5 are in unregulated care or cared for at home
- parents are putting their children’s names on waiting lists for quality care before they are born!
- a large percent (75%) of working mothers with young children are working outside their homes; others are in various education and training programs⁹; for these families, child care is not a choice, it is a necessity
- at the same time, many existing centres are threatened with closure after the move to all-day kindergarten; they must raise fees to take in younger children but parents can’t afford the fee increase; the need is there but the supply is shrinking

4. High fees – unaffordable for most families...

- most families must pay the full cost of care
- fees for quality care can be as high as \$90 dollars a day or \$24,000 a year; obviously, many working families cannot afford these high fees
- high fees force ordinary families to use informal arrangements with no guarantees of quality and reliability

<http://www.thestar.com/business/article/1293463--td-economics-says-child-care-should-be-a-top-spending-priority-for-governments-after-deficits-eliminated>

⁸ TD Economics Special Report – Early Childhood Education has Widespread and Long Lasting Benefits as quoted in article above. This is available online at http://www.td.com/document/PDF/economics/special/di1112_EarlyChildhoodEducation.pdf.

⁹ .” The Path to Better Child Care in Ontario.” Martha Friendly and Trish Hennessy. pg. 3. This report can be downloaded from

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/path-better-child-care-ontario>.

- the market has not provided child care options that meet the needs of working families at a cost they can afford
- in most municipalities, there are long lists of parents applying for subsidies, many more than are available. In the city of Toronto, the number of spots has barely increased since 1994. The need is now at 24,000 and that would only meet the needs of 28 % of the city's low income children.¹⁰

5. No systematic publicly managed delivery of this service...

- Ontario lacks a coherent policy for delivering quality early learning and child care.
- instead, parents face an uneven patchwork of nonprofit, municipal or community-based groups, informal home care, and increasingly, for-profit, corporate child care centres, now up to 25%, even though these centres are often of a lesser quality than the public and non-profit centres¹¹

So, what would a public system look like:

Accessible to all children and families everywhere in Ontario...

- addresses the diversities of Ontario's population
- regardless of income level, age of children, location, or parents' work schedules, all families would have access to an early learning and child care centre offering high quality programming
- it would be delivered through a public system as is our public system of education
- regulated home-based care would continue to be an option for parents who prefer a home setting
- for-profit centres would no longer be needed

¹⁰ "TAKE MY KIDS, PLEASE! Naomi Buck. Toronto Life. October 2012.

¹¹ "A large body of research shows that child care facilities whose aim is to make profits tend to provide poorer quality, access, and accountability than public and non-profit child care programs." The Path to Better Child Care in Ontario. Martha Friendly and Trish Hennessy. pg. 4. See 1 for website download information.

Early learning and child care centres would be characterized by...

- built space designed for children's best learning needs and care; this would include things like easy access to the outdoors for outside play.
- staff trained in early childhood education following best practices in the field
- staff salaries and benefits at a level that reflects the value of the work
- play-based programs since this is how children learn
- fees that all parents could afford with subsidies for all who need them
- supportive partnerships with parents in learning and care delivery
- care would be provided at all levels from infancy to before and after-school care for older children.

Administration and delivery through the Ministry of Education...

- CFUW suggests that a public system of early learning and child care be developed by the Early Learning Division already in the Ministry of Education.
- early learning and child care would be managed at the community/municipal level...with the care components and early learning based on best practices in the field...
- regulated home-based care would continue to be an option
- funding would likely be based on a combination of federal transfer grants, provincial funding, and reasonable fees paid by parents.
- for a look at how this might be done, consult: Moving to a System of Integrated Early Care & Learning in BC.: The Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning. This comprehensive document describes in detail how the move to a public system of early learning and childcare might be achieved and how to pay for it.¹²

¹² "Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning." published by Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and Early Childhood Educators of BC, November, 2012. This is available online at http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/plan/Community_Plan_ECL.pdf.

HOW TO CONTACT POLITICIANS

MP, MPP, Councillor, School Trustee

Booking the Appointment

- Phone the constituency office. Tell them who you represent and that you want to discuss Early Learning and Child Care.
- Send an introductory letter prior to the phone call. Remind them when you phone of the date you sent the letter and any reply you have received.
- Confirm the date and time of the meeting in a letter or an e-mail, including what you want to discuss and the people who will be there.

Before the Meeting

- Prepare notes and rehearse your presentation. Make it as succinct as possible; you will probably have less than a half-hour meeting. Leave time for discussion.
- Be aware of any position or statement they have taken on the issue.
- Limit the delegation to no more than four.
- Leave a copy of "Proposal for Ontario Early Learning and Child Care System" and the Fact Sheet.

Remember

You are a constituent, an advocate with advantages that a professional national lobbyist can't bring to bear. Your added advantage is that you represent a national organization with a history of advocacy.



Fact Sheet on Child Care

March 16 2013

CONSIDER THIS:

- ✓ The first four years of life are critical to long-term well being and success.
- ✓ In Ontario only 20% of children have access to regulated early learning and childcare.
- ✓ Every dollar invested in pre-school children brings economic benefits to society.
- ✓ Currently, fees for quality early learning and childcare are prohibitive for many families in Ontario.
- ✓ Early Childhood Educators are the lowest paid in the educational system.
- ✓ BC has proposed a \$10.00 a day plan for a public system of integrated early care and not-for-profit learning.
- ✓ Begun gradually in 1997 Quebec has long had a subsidized childcare program for \$7.00 per day.
- ✓ In Manitoba the maximum fees are currently at \$30 for infants, and less than \$10 a day for school-aged kids.

We need your help

to campaign for an accessible, affordable, high quality, publicly funded not-for-profit program

In Ontario

REFERENCE LIST for Early Learning/Child Care

1. **Early Years: Study 3** - McCain, Mustard and McCuaig, Margaret & Wallace McCain Family Foundation. Toronto. 2011. The study is available online for download at <http://earlyyearsstudy.ca/download-early-years-study-3/> .
2. **A Compelling Case for Investing in Children**. OMSSA May 2005. This is available online at <http://www.omssa.com/lib/db2file.asp?fileid=35350> .
3. **With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario**- Charles E Pascal, Oct. 2012. This can be downloaded from <http://www.ontario.ca/education-and-training/early-learning-report>
4. **New Evidence About Childcare in Canada**-IRPP Choices –Vol.14, no.12 , 2008 This is available at <http://www.irpp.org/choices/archive/vol14no12.pdf>
5. **The Path to Better Child Care in Ontario**- Martha Friendly and Trish Hennessy, Sept. 2012. This can be downloaded from <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/path-better-child-care-ontario>
6. **Child care Fee Subsidies in Canada**- Jane Beach and Martha Friendly. This is available at http://www.childcarequality.ca/wdocs/QbD_FeeSubsidies_Canada.pdf
7. **The pursuit of profit in Ontario child care: Risky business for parents and government**. This can be accessed online at: <http://cupe.on.ca/a4488/Ontario%20Childcare%20At%20Risk.pdf>
8. **Modernizing Child Care in Ontario** -discussion paper, August 2012 http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/Modernizing_Child_Care.pdf
9. **From Vision to Action: Early Childhood Education and Care in 2020**- Martha Friendly and Susan Prentice http://www.childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/BN_visiontoaction.pdf
10. **Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning**. published by Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and Early Childhood Educators of BC, November, 2012. This is available online at http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/plan/Community_Plan_ECL.pdf.
11. **Publicly Funded Childcare for Increased Female Labour Force Participation**-Deborah Liu –Policy Options-August 2012. This is available at: <http://www.irpp.org/po/archive/aug12/liu.pdf>
12. **TD Economics Special Report – Early Childhood Education has Widespread and Long Lasting Benefits** as quoted in article above. This is available online at http://www.td.com/document/PDF/economics/special/di1112_EarlyChildhoodEducation.pdf .

13. **Child Care Canada publications**

<http://www.childcarecanada.org/publications/ecec-canada/07/06/publications/ecec-canada/13/02/state-early-childhood-education-and-care-canada-2010-trends-and-analy>