

## **BILL C-303 UPDATE, NOVEMBER 2007 VOTE – LIBERAL MP LETTER REVEALS POLITICAL GAMES**

The supporters of daycare Bill C-303 avoided a debate on the amended form of the Bill by voting only to pass it at the 'report' stage. The Bill has therefore NOT yet been approved, and Third Reading in the House of Commons has been put off until late January 2008.

This November letter from Liberal MP Marlene Jennings to the Quebec group Child Care Equity reveals the following:

- The Opposition already knows daycare Bill C-303 will not pass. It is about playing political games and mudslinging, not about caring for our children, or even about funding daycare.
- The idea that the Bill is intended to keep 'big box' foreign daycare chains out of Canada is just spin.
- The NDP was not even sure of Liberal support for the vote November 21 and feared they may abstain thereby killing the Bill, according to NDP staff.

### **EXCERPTS FROM THE LETTER:**

**"The Speaker has ruled that this bill requires a Royal Recommendation which it is unlikely to receive."**

**"The requirement for a Royal Recommendation and the fact that one is unlikely to be granted by the Minister make passage of the Bill unrealistic. In its current form it will be stopped by the speaker at third reading."**

**Politically, Bill C-303:**

- allows us to keep the Childcare issue alive and at the forefront of the political agenda in the House of Commons
- allows us to point out Conservative failures on this policy front.
- gives us the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to Childcare, and to be seen supporting our flagship program of Early Learning and Childcare.

**While the Bill stipulates that the child care services that will be eligible for federal funding must be provided for on a not-for-profit basis, previous Liberal approaches to child care have not focused on this.**

**The profit, non-profit debate must not distract from the real goal of ensuring high-quality, affordable community-based child care.**

- Contrary to NDP sloganeering, Liberal governments were active on the child care file well before 2005
- The reason Canada does not have an Early Learning and Child Care system is because the NDP worked with the Conservatives to prematurely end the last Parliament.

## LETTER TO LIBERAL MPS FROM CHILD CARE EQUITY AND COMPLETE LETTER IN REPLY

From: childcare equity [mailto:childcareequity@hotmail.com]

Sent: November 21, 2007 11:16 AM

Subject: C-303 \* It's still not too late to do the "real" RIGHT thing

November 21, 2007

Bill C-303 - VOTE NOV 22, 2007

Dear Liberal MP

It never ceases to amaze me how some myopic elected officials and bureaucrats tout that they are doing the "right thing" by ramming through a bill to invest money and energy into govt-run daycare as though it were the only care option.

What about the families? What about choice!

I am always curious as to how many of these so-called do-gooders have attended or would have preferred to attend a full-time daycare ( be it "big-box" or "the lady next door").

Let's get our priorities straight, people...

Pay the families directly, the equivalent daily subsidized amount per child for a daycare space (Quebec spends well over \$50 a day/child) and we'll see how few families would opt for "big-box low-paying jobs at near minimum wage" instead of the prospect of cutting back on their gruelling schedule to spend more time with their children. This would free up needed spaces for those who have no other alternative but to work to support their families.

Some families do need public daycare, but here in Quebec, spaces have been clogged up by the "Universality-loving" first-come first served clients, not the families who are in real need! Bill C303 is just replicating this empty, "smoke and mirrors" promise.

I'm not at all convinced that "Québec sait faire!" with regards to daycare. Our Group, Childcare Equity, has been pushing for years to see scientific proof that Quebec's government-run daycare is better "for kids" (and not employers). It's been 10 years!!!! The Quebec gov't still hasn't had the political will or backbone to launch solid long-term studies on the effects of daycare regarding social behaviour, family health as well as drop-out rates at the high school level not to mention the gang problems.

As a Quebecker, I can hardly wait to see the tax bill for Quebec's long-term Social Services and Justice Department costs when a full generation of Pauline Marois' DAYCARE babies hits the streets as adults. (We're almost there, folks!)

I also feel sorry for the aging Boomers who will be receiving their care from this overlooked "Daycare generation" that was shipped out to strangers and told to suck it up! I guess the Boomers will soon be sucking it up too!

As a parent, I strongly feel that we get what we give... As for our politicians, I suspect that they too will get it in the end... be it at the ballot box, or the seniors home!!!!

\$7 daycare for BABY / \$7 daycare for GRAMPA! Will there even be a difference?

Please, don't be lulled into the general media spin that during the last Quebec provincial election, the ADQ's election as official opposition (and nearly the governing party) was due solely to the Accomodation Issue. That's not the

impression I got. I live in a very Bloc/PQ riding (Masson) and the PQ & Libs got their butts kicked throughout the whole region. A fast-growing geographic area, with many young families !!! If it happened in Quebec, it can happen across Canada. Remember Outremont!

Let's not forget that the ADQ also recognized "multiple childcare needs" by promising families \$5,200 (tax-free) per child to assist low-income families in making ends meet and give "choice" in childcare for their own children.

There is still time to step back from this ill-thought out bill and lay it in the laps of the "New Official Opposition" The NDP. Let them explain to parents how it is they know what's best for Canada's kids, over and above the actual parents!

If you can't vote against it in the House, ....then vote with your feet!

It's all up to you now! PLEASE PUT CANADIAN CHILDREN FIRST!

Thank you...

Yvonne Coupal,  
Coordinator / Coordinatrice

Citizens in Favour of Equal Government Childcare Subsidies for All Children

Les citoyen(ne)s en faveur de l'équité fiscale des subventions pour soins de garde pour tous les enfants

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## **REPLY**

Ottawa, November 22nd, 2007

Ms. Yvonne Coupal  
Coordinator  
Citizens in Favour of Equal Government

Dear Ms. Coupal:

I acknowledge receipt and thank you for your correspondence dated November 21st, 2007, in which you express your views and concerns regarding Bill C-303, The Early Learning and Child Care Act.

I have duly taken note of your correspondence. Please be assured that your views and comments have been carefully considered.

Bill C-303 aims to enshrine Early Learning and Child Care in Legislation and introduces criteria and conditions for a transfer payment in support of the early learning and child care program of a province or territory.

The Speaker has ruled that this bill requires a Royal Recommendation which it is unlikely to receive.

Highlights of the Proposed Act

The Act is almost a replication of the Liberal Early Learning and Child Care Initiative. There are five differences:

1) An exemption for Quebec. The Act recognizes the unique nature of the jurisdiction of the Government of Quebec with regard to the education and development of children in Quebec society. It gives the province the option of choosing to exempt itself from the Act while still enabling the Government of Quebec to receive the full transfer payment.

2) The Act requires the Minister to report on the provision of child care services in each province and territory to Parliament annually. The report will contain for each fiscal year: descriptions of the early learning and child care programs of each province, territory and aboriginal people's organization; the amount expended by the government of each province and territory and by each aboriginal peoples' organization; and, indicators of availability and indicators of quality.

3) The Act calls for the appointment of an Advisory Council. The council will be made up of 18 individuals who support the purposes of the Act and include representatives of early learning and child care organizations as well as representatives of provincial and territorial government, representatives of aboriginal organizations as well as parents.

4) The Bill also stipulates that the child care services that will be eligible for federal funding must be provided for on a not-for-profit basis. The Act grandfathers existing for-profit child care centres and ensures that these centres will continue to be eligible for federal funding. Also eligible will be services provided by an individual authorized to do so under provincial or territorial law.

5) The First Reading version of the Act did not mention First Nations, however the bill was amended during committee and the Report Stage version of the Bill (which was not voted on) was amended to include aboriginal peoples' organizations.

The clause regarding accessibility and payment for early learning and child care services was also amended by the committee, "applicable provincial or territorial" law was added.

The Liberal Party is correctly identified with Child Care. Even though C-303 is sponsored by the NDP, the child care lobby sees it as the Liberal Early Learning and Child Care initiative with a few additions. The requirement for a Royal Recommendation and the fact that one is unlikely to be granted by the Minister make passage of the Bill unrealistic. In its current form it will be stopped by the speaker at third reading.

Politically, Bill C-303:

- allows us to keep the Childcare issue alive and at the forefront of the political agenda in the House of Commons
- allows us to point out Conservative failures on this policy front.
- gives us the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to Childcare, and to be seen supporting our flagship program of Early Learning and Childcare.

While the Bill stipulates that the child care services that will be eligible for federal funding must be provided for on a not-for-profit basis, previous Liberal approaches to child care have not focused on this. Future approaches are expected to focus on high-quality, community based care based on the QUAD principles. The profit, non-profit debate must not distract from the real goal of ensuring high-quality, affordable community-based child care.

In the last election the Liberal party pledged to make the federal government's commitment to a national early learning and child care system permanent. The previous Liberal government had reached agreements under the ELCC initiative with all 10 provinces, and the 3 territories, to create much needed early learning and child care spaces to help families meet their child care needs.

\* In the 2006 Budget the Conservatives cut \$3.6 billion in transfers to the provinces intended for childcare by cancelling the last 3 years of funding available through the Early Learning and Child Care Initiative.

\* Our commitment to a national ELCC program was in addition to other significant Liberal initiatives to support families including the Canada Child Tax Benefit, National Child Benefit Supplement, the Child Care Expenses Deduction, and existing investments in early childhood development such as the Early Childhood Development Agreement (ECD) and the Multilateral Framework Agreement

\* Contrary to NDP sloganeering, Liberal governments were active on the child care file well before 2005. In 2000, a multilateral accord called the Early Childhood Development Initiative, worth \$500 million annually, was agreed to by the First Ministers. In accordance with the accord, the federal government provided funding to provinces and territories to improve and expand early childhood development programs and services for children under 6. The Conservative government upheld the funding.

\* Under the 2003 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care, an additional \$1.05 billion was provided over five years to enhance early learning and child care programs for children under six.

\* Another \$35 million was committed for early learning and child care services for First Nations children living on reserve. This was increased by \$10 million in 2004.

\* The reason Canada does not have an Early Learning and Child Care system is because the NDP worked with the Conservatives to prematurely end the last Parliament. However, we acknowledge that the purpose of the Act is to enshrine early learning and child care in legislation.

\* The agreements reached with the provinces under the ELCC initiative were the first steps towards putting in place the foundations of a national early learning and child care program. The proposed Act will not replace the accomplishments of the ELCC initiative, but it upholds the ELCC's values of quality, universality, accessibility and development.

\* The Conservative government has had 22 months to come up with a plan to fulfill its election commit to create to create 25,000 new child care spaces a year by giving businesses and non-profit organizations financial incentives, and has yet to deliver a strategy. The Conservatives have failed to deliver.

\* Childcare advocacy groups and stakeholders have given the Conservatives a failing grade on the issue of Early Learning and Child Care.

Please be assured that you can count on my energy and availability during the 39th Parliament. As the Official Opposition, Liberals will be responsible and principled. We will work hard to make Parliament function and pursue our efforts in defending the liberal values.

Once again, I thank you for having shared your concerns on this issue.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Marlene Jennings, P.C., M.P.  
Notre-Dame-de-Grâce - Lachine

MJ-ac