

KIDS FIRST PARENT ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

www.kidsfirstcanada.org

604-291-0088

info@kidsfirstcanada.org

**BRIEF TO
PRE-BUDGETARY CONSULTATIONS**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canadian parents and children are being adversely discriminated against in policy relating to child care and early learning. We note that the current government has improved the situation and taken steps to setting a new tone, but we have is a long way to go.

This discrimination has been justified or gone unnoticed due to deceptive definitions of key terms such as ‘child care’, ‘learning’, and ‘work’, and misinformation regarding: negative quality and effects of group care, mothers’ work, exaggerated demand for and use of daycare centres.

CHIEF RECOMMENDATION

In the matter of fiscal policy concerning child care and early learning, governments and other bodies in Canada continue to discriminate against most parents and children. Preferential fiscal and material support for non-parental care and learning, and especially for care/learning in licensed group facilities, has become the norm. The result is that policy punishes parents for looking after our own children.

Therefore, we recommend that in the matter of all policies related to child care and early learning, the federal government ensure that federal policies and laws - as well as those of the provinces, territories, municipalities, other governing bodies and other institutions - uphold the Constitution’s guarantees of equality regardless of family status, sex, religion, conscience, language, etc. The federal government must prohibit the use of definitions of relevant terms - such as ‘child care’, ‘learning’, ‘work’, ‘leisure’, ‘child development’, etc. - that result in discrimination against parents and children involved in parent-provided care and early learning.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Replace the GDP** and the measure of all production and of well- being.
- Reject OECD policy** for families for families, mothers, and children
- Full equality for women:** equitable financing for child-rearing work on a par with other socially essential paid work.
- Consolidate all expenditures** on children’s care/early learning and replace with a **direct funding to parents** through the tax system.

WHO WE ARE

Kids First Parent Association of Canada was established in 1987 with 2 objectives: support for the optimal care of children, and support and recognition for parental child care. We are **100% volunteer run**, and receive no government, corporate or union funding. We endeavour to be a voice for the 90% of parents who say they prefer parental child care (Vanier Inst 2004). However, please note the huge **power**

imbalance between our voice and the voices of those paid well to advance other agendas for parents and children.

In addition to existing discriminatory policy, new policy regarding ‘integration’ of school and child care, ‘full day kindergarten’, ‘pre-kindergarten’, ‘wrap around’ and ‘seamless’ institutional child care are being enacted or discussed by some provinces.

As our objectives indicate, we advocate for high quality child care and early learning. All children need child care and learning: children suffer and die without these.

But at issue is: what do these terms mean?

INCLUSION AND EQUALITY FOR FAMILIES, PARENTS & CHILDREN

The Canadian Charter, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are violated under current ‘child care’ and ‘early learning’ and related policy. Daycare lobby academics have ignored the preeminence given to the parent-child relationship in the UN documents.

From the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

Preamble – “Convinced that **the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community...**”

-“**Recognizing that the child...should grow up in a family environment...**”

3,1 – “**the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.**”

2,1 - “States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth ... **without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's ... political or other opinion, ...social origin, property, ... or other status.**”

5 - “**States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents**”

7,1 - 1 “**The child has the right to ... be cared for by his or her parents.**”

RELATED LEGAL ACTIONS

1-The discrimination against First Nations children and parents that was manifested in the residential schools policy was initiated and defended on similar grounds to the discrimination here discussed: namely parental lack of expertise, ‘economic’ growth, ‘human capital quality’. The costly legal quagmire that resulted is well known and is a cautionary tale.

2-In a case involving a father caring for his severely handicapped adult daughter, the BC Human Rights Tribunal ruled that the government could **not refuse to fund a care-provider simply because he was a family member**. They were awarded \$300,000 and future yearly funding. This ruling was upheld on appeal. Bills like this would be contested in lawsuits that could cost billions. See Hutchinson vs Min Health

[http://www.bchrt.bc.ca/decisions/2004/pdf/Hutchinson v BC \(Ministry of Health\) \(No 2\) 2004 B CHRT_122.pdf](http://www.bchrt.bc.ca/decisions/2004/pdf/Hutchinson_v_BC_(Ministry_of_Health)_No_2_2004_BCHRT_122.pdf))

RECOMMENDATION

There shall be **no preferential treatment** for any form of child care and early learning. That is **state neutrality regarding child care and early learning** decisions. A template may be found in Liberal Party and government 1997-99 policy stated in "Final Report of the Sub-committee on Tax Equity for Families of Dependent Children of the Finance Committee" 1999

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDOc/36/1/STFC/Studies/Reports/finarp19/08-rap-e.htm>

and in "Report of the Ad Hoc Study Group on Valuing Caregivers to the National Liberal Caucus Social Policy Committee," 1998.

DISCRIMINATION SUPPORTED THROUGH A CAMPAIGN OF DIS-INFORMATION

Those promoting discrimination against parents and children in parental care/learning situations have attempted to justify this discrimination in several ways.

1-DEFINITIONS: DELIBERATE DECEPTION

Using **inclusive definitions** when saying there are benefits, and then using an **exclusive definition** when it comes to funding is a deliberately deceptive tactic.

Research showing that 'child care', 'early development' and 'early learning', etc, are beneficial, and polls showing they are popular, use **broad inclusive definitions**.

Such definitions used include: Sunday School, parental care, prenatal classes, going to the library, preschool, mother-baby drop-ins, music lessons, and studies of rat pups licked by their mothers.

These situations then get lumped with 50 hours/wk for an infant in a daycare center to say 'child care and early learning' is beneficial. But **there is no peer-reviewed study in any academic journal that shows long term benefits of long hours in licensed daycare from birth**.

2-USE OF AND DEMAND FOR DAYCARE CENTRES IS GREATLY EXAGGERATED

-**Only 14.9% of children ages 6 months- 5 years are in daycare centers Canada-wide.** Statistics Canada did not report this statistic and buried it on the third to last page of the un-indexed the 2006 report. Instead, Statistics Canada reported that 52% of children are in ‘child care’.

-Stats Can., *Child Care in Canada* <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/89-599-MIE/89-599-MIE2006003.pdf> p.97

-Quebec: Age 1-5yrs: 21%, under age one 9%.

-Outside Quebec: Age 1-5yrs: 10%.

-Merrigan and Lefebvre *Low Fee Regulated Childcare*
<http://132.203.59.36/CIRPEE/cahierscirpee/2005/files/CIRPEE05-08.pdf> p34

-age 6-12: 3.9%

-Vanier Institute: *Profiling Canadian Families II* chart 69a,b, 1995 data from Stats. Can. *Nat. Longitudinal Survey of Children & Youth*

-‘**Wait lists**’: These have **no statistical validity whatsoever**. They do not measure demand or use of daycare. They are at best ‘reservation lists’. Lists may include names of children who are not born or whose parents do not want a space for years. Names can be placed on any number of lists. Names are not removed systematically. The daycare lobby has used these lists as a **propaganda tool** and told parents to sign up early and often thus creating logistical problems for both parents seeking daycare and also for daycare operators.

3-DIS-INFORMATIONS REGARDING MOTHERS’ WORK AND LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

-**Every mother is a working mother**, save those who are dead or comatose. It is misogynistic in the extreme to define ‘work’ to exclude the care work done primarily by mothers. Those who continue to do so— especially policy makers and advisors – are causing untold harm to women.

-Mothers’ Labour Force Participation (LFP) rates are used as a **false proxy for demand** for daycare. However, LFP includes mothers: on paid and unpaid leave from paid jobs, doing and paid work at all –no minimum hours or pay, who say they are looking for a job, who do unpaid work in a family farm or business, who do paid work with their children present, who do paid work away from their children but do not use or want daycare center care.

4-NEGATIVE FINDINGS FOR GROUP CARE/EARLY LEARNING SUPPRESSED

Internationally renowned child development authority and author, Dr Penelope Leach, has called this practice a “**cover up campaign**”.

Little-reported negative findings repeatedly verified include:

*minimal or sub-minimal **quality** of care in group care, inadequate to meet developmental needs. California, Quebec and Sweden are examples.

*much higher rates of **illness and infection**. An epidemiologist has called daycare centres “**the open sewers of the 20th century**”.

*high levels of **stress** as measured by cortisol levels

*higher levels of **negative behaviour lasting into at least grade 6**, regardless of ‘quality’ of care. Dr Edward Zigler - the ‘father of Head Start’ preschool called a high rated daycare “**psychological thalidomide**”. Dr Jay Belsky, advisor to UK PM Brown, has called current allowable staff:child ratios “**a license to neglect**”.

5-THE ‘BUSINESS IMPERATIVE’ ARGUMENT IS PROFOUNDLY UNDEMOCRATIC

Early child development as an “**industry**”, a “**business imperative**”, a source of ‘positive effect on labour supply’, GDP growth and corporate profits has been advanced by OECD, the World Bank, and the RAND Corporation, and in Canada also by the Human Early Learning Partnership, Charles Coffey of the RBC and Fraser Mustard, etc.

This argument is not often given front page publicity as it is highly offensive to most to see the corporate sector trying to ‘make a buck’ off children by lobbying for policy that harms parents and children.

Instead we hear marketable propaganda from the spin doctorates, misinformation about improving women’s equality, child development, and relieving child poverty.

Corporate welfare: Over the past 30 years, redirecting public funds to putting children in some form of state-funded institutional care, instead of to parents themselves, has forced more parents – especially mothers – to do more time as employees than they would freely choose.

This has artificially increased the labour pool and thus lowered wage pressures, increasing profit margins.

Additionally, daycare is intended to act as a “low wage subsidy” for mothers: **McJobs for Mums**. Again, profit margins increase because wages are artificially low. In the case of **work-fare McJobs for Mums**, this subsidy is even greater.

However, justifying this discriminatory policy on the basis of such false economic arguments is akin to justifying slavery on exactly the same basis. Such arguments must be exposed, debated openly and rejected. At a minimum, such policy creates an unjust, unsustainable and ‘**false economy**’.