

The National Fund the Child Press Conference
Parliament Hill – Monday, November 21, 2005, 11:00 a.m.

Welcome to our National Fund the Child Press Conference. The purpose of this conference is to generate interest and awareness in the media and the Canadian public for our position which is based on the legal and inalienable right of parents to decide what kind of care is in the best interests of their child, a right which is violated by Paul Martin's 'one-size-fits-all' government run National Daycare Program.

I will first briefly introduce our seven members in attendance today. They are:

- ❖ **Sara Landriault** of Ottawa who did a fabulous job as our Ottawa Rally coordinator.
- ❖ **Donna Sheehan** of Toronto who served as the Coordinator for our very successful National Day of Protest this past Saturday during which Canadians gathered in seventeen cities across the country to protest the National Childcare Program because it is not based upon equity and choice.
- ❖ **Yvonne Coupal** of Montreal and the Founder of Child Care Equity, Équité Soins de Garde.
- ❖ **Helen Ward** of Vancouver and President of Kids First Parents Association of Canada, a national organization.
- ❖ **Michelle Olson** of Edmonton. Vice-president of Home by Choice parenting group and a teacher.
- ❖ **Emma Tennier-Stuart**, my daughter.
- ❖ Me, **Kate Tennier** from Toronto, founder of the Ontario based Advocates for Childcare Choice.

Yvonne Coupal will speak first on the problems in the Quebec daycare system and why it should serve as a warning to the rest of Canada to not bring such a discriminatory, regressive, unexamined and unproven concept to the rest of the country. **Helen Ward** will speak about the very troubling concern that the National Childcare Program is indeed founded upon a 'Campaign of Misinformation'. And, I will speak about recent developments in Sweden, developments which put the lie to the idea that a system of universal daycare is a good thing. We will then take questions.

Yvonne Coupal:

childcareequity@hotmail.com 450-966-6124 (cell: 514-592-8312)

Ladies and Gentlemen / Mesdames et Messieurs,

Before beginning, I would ask you to indulge me with a few extra minutes of time as I have been asked to express this subject matter in both of Canada's official languages.

Avant de commencer, puis-je demander votre collaboration en m'accordant quelques petites minutes supplémentaires car on voudrait expliquer le sujet dans les deux langues officielles du Canada.

My name is Yvonne Coupal, Quebec coordinator for the National Fund the Child Coalition.

I am here with you today to speak in favour of , and for... **THE** most precious resource Canada has...its children.

I am here with you today to speak in favour of, and for... a fair and inclusive national child care program... where the funds flow with the child, not directly to a government approved caregiver.

I am here with you today ...to urge Paul Martin and his government to immediately place a moratorium on the current National Child Care Program due to its bias and discriminatory nature, as it excludes the majority of Canada's children.

I am **not** here to speak against any one child care choice. I am here to speak in favour of ALL CANADIAN CHILDREN and for the recognition of flexibility in child care choices to better meet the needs of those children.

No one form of child care should be placed above all others. We must not put all of our eggs into one basket....

In 1957, the pride and joy of Canada, our Medicare system, was first implemented. It was looked upon as the jewel in the crown, however only 4 short years later, in 1961, the federal government established the Royal Commission on Health Services to study and report on the health care needs of Canadians at the time. The government of that day had the courage to take an in-depth look at whether this panacea in health care was living up to its expectations and to find ways of improving it.

Today, we see Quebec turning away from institutionalized care **for the elderly**. Health Minister Couillard has begun to speak of **natural caregivers** (a new term for **family members**) and their important place within Quebec's healthcare network.

Was this “virage” or “turnaround” necessary ?

Yes, because Quebec’s health institutions are overburdened and understaffed...

Should such a “virage” toward natural caregivers, such as a parent or guardian, also be in order for the National Child Care Program ?

As of yet, no Canadian politician has had either the political will or the political courage to ask that very important question...

In 1997, the Quebec government-of-the-day, the Parti Québécois, rammed through their “**pie-in-sky**”, “**pre-electoral**”, \$5-a-day daycare program, citing statistics mainly from France and Belgium, to support their claims that daycare was THE only form of child care **worthy** of government funding...

We are now in 2005. Quebec’s daycare network has been in place for 8 years and contains important information. If Paul Martin and his government are truly sincere about doing what’s right for Canadian children and not simply seeking to use the child care issue for electioneering purposes, then both he and his Minister of Social Development, Ken Dryden, will not hesitate to set up a **Parliamentary Commission on Child Care Services in Canada** to examine existing daycare set-ups within the country and the long-term effects of daycare on our children and Canadian society as whole.

Mr. Martin has already proven his ability to swiftly and decisively put a stop to any government program which is not in the best interest of Canadians. So we ask him to once again, **do the right thing** ...and take the time to **reexamine** his well-intentioned National Child Care Program, before other federal political parties inevitably call for such a report.

Before settling on an inflexible, discriminatory child care system, it is imperative that we be cautious, especially where our children are concerned...a Parliamentary Commission is a positive way of ensuring the viability of the current National Daycare Program, and to report on the real care needs of all Canadian children, **before committing** Canadian **society** and its hard-earned **tax dollars** to one, solitary form of childcare.

For any Child Care Program to be truly National, no child can ever be excluded.

FUND THE CHILD...

FRANÇAIS

Bonjour,

Je me présente, Yvonne Coupal, coordonnatrice au Québec pour la Coalition canadienne pour un appui financier à tous les enfants.

Je suis ici avec vous aujourd'hui pour parler en faveur de...**LA** plus précieuse ressource au Canada...nos enfants.

Je suis ici avec vous aujourd'hui pour parler en faveur d'un...programme juste et inclusif...où les fonds suivront l'enfant, et ne seront pas verser directement à un centre qui a l'approbation d'un gouvernement.

Je suis ici avec vous aujourd'hui... pour demander à Paul Martin et son gouvernement de mettre en place **un moratoire immédiat**, sur le Programme nationale des garderies, dû à sa nature biaisée et discriminatoire, car il exclus la majorité des enfants canadiens.

En 1997, le Parti Québécois était au pouvoir. Ils ont légiféré leur programme pré-électoral et utopique, des garderies à 5\$ par jour comme LA seule forme de soins de garde d'enfants **digne** de recevoir des fonds gouvernementaux.

Nous sommes maintenant en 2005. Le réseau québécois des services de garde est maintenant en place depuis 8 ans et contient énormément d'information . Si Paul Martin et son gouvernement sont réellement sincère de vouloir faire ce qui est de mieux pour nos enfants canadiens, et s'ils ne veulent pas profiter du dossier des soins de garde d'enfants simplement pour avancer leur cause électorale, Mr. Martin et son Ministre de développement sociale, Ken Dryden, n'hésiteront pas de mettre en place un **Commission parlementaire sur les services en soins de garde d'enfants au Canada** pour examiner les réseaux de services de garde existants déjà dans le pays ainsi que les effet à long terme des garderies sur nos enfants et la société canadienne en général.

Pour qu'un Programme de garde d'enfants soit réelement National, aucun enfant ne peut y être exclus

L'ENFANT D'ABORD ...

Merci. / Thank You.

Helen Ward:

info@kidsfirstcanada.org

604-291-0088

Kids First is 100% grassroots volunteer run since 1987. We receive no funding from government, corporations or unions. We do this work from our homes while multi-tasking with our kids, pets, and our paid and unpaid activities.

The daycare lobby is heavily sponsored by government, especially by Social Development Canada. The government is funding its own lobbyists. It is also sponsored by corporations, unions, the World Bank and the OECD. None of these are famous for promoting children's well-being. The last Federal Budget awarded the lobby \$100 Million MORE for so-called accountability research.

I'd like to tell you about this research, and accountability, because we are announcing that we will be asking AUDITOR GENERAL, Sheila Fraser, to investigate the formulation of this policy.

The top architects of the daycare lobby have built this policy on a **campaign of misinformation**. Our politicians are dependent on their policy advisors, they cannot possibly read all the fine print and know all the questions to ask on every issue. And all citizens, especially parents and women, also have a right to accurate information from government sources when we make choices regarding our children's care. But instead, we have un-truths and suppression of relevant information.

Why? This has happened because this discriminatory policy is rooted in an **two-pronged ideological agenda**. On what basis do I make this claim? Reading the research on their tax-funded websites. The so-called "mountains of evidence," the "overwhelming evidence." The daycare lobby's "research" is done at universities—mainly U of T—which wins it the respect accorded to academic research. But their organizations are independent and not subject to the required scholarly practice of peer review.

Their "research" states explicitly that they reject "empirical evidence" based on "developmental science." They simply reject evidence that shows children's healthy development requires a strong adult attachment. This is akin to the Ministry of Health rejecting germ theory on ideological grounds.

The "research" states that they reject prevailing "societal attitudes," both "conservative family values" **and** the "liberal ideology" of "individual choice".

The daycare researchers at the OECD oppose what they call “the ideology of the family.” *My family is not* an ideology.

What then is policy based on? Instead of established science, they look to experimental theories which emphasize children’s bonds to peers with “adults interfering as little as possible in baby and toddler activities.” What do they want, what is the agenda? One goal is the familiar goal of the corporate sector promoted under the doctrine of increasing “**Labour Force Attachment**” for mothers: a massive public subsidy for a low wage “flexible workforce.” And this dovetails with the other goal, promoted under the doctrine of “**Shared Responsibility**”—parents “sharing” responsibility for our children with the state and other “stakeholders”: they state that we are in transition to “a new order. This includes deep changes in societies and in the family’s structure in particular, a redefinition of state and family relationships concerning children’s affairs.” They are trying to create what they call the “public child.”

And we are paying for this with our tax dollars designated for “child care.”

Obviously this Brave New World Order agenda would never be knowingly endorsed by the public or the politicians, so instead we have the Campaign of Mis-Information to condition us to accept this policy.

A FEW EXAMPLES:

1- we hear everywhere that “70% of mothers are in the paid workforce outside the home”. It is the leading statistic this policy is built on.

But it is NOT TRUE. Stats Can doesn’t even measure anything called “paid workforce.” The 70% is mothers’ Labour Force Participation Rate,

BUT what does that mean? It includes:

- UNpaid work in a family business
- UNpaid parental leave
- looking for a job, unemployed
- any paid work at all—no minimum
- paid work done from home

IN short 70% is a totally bogus NON-fact.

2 – We hear constantly that there is a shortage of daycare spaces. But, in fact there is SURPLUS. According to the daycare lobby-researchers’ *You Bet I Care!* report the majority of daycares in Canada have VACANCIES, with 15% reporting over 1 in 5 spaces vacant.

3 – We hear the promise of quality and developmentally appropriate care, the Q and D

of the so-called QUAD principles. That daycare is of “far higher quality” than parental care and every other form of care, dramatically improving children’s brains and socialization. That a dollar spent on daycare saves \$2-\$7. That daycare will enable Canada to whip India and China in the Knowledge Based global economy.

But the same *You Bet I Care!* study and OECD report and others find that the majority of government-regulated care in Canada is of “minimal to mediocre quality” and is failing to provide adequately for children’s cognitive and language development. And that study was with ratios of staff to children much better than the allowable numbers we have now: up to 8 one year olds per staff in Quebec. 8!

4 – As for withholding relevant information, what findings do they know but NOT publicize? What is subjected to what they actually identify as the “editing process”?

Findings from massive PEER REVIEWED multi-agency scholarly studies of 1000s of children are buried or simply ignored. These include:

- the US National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the Oxford findings of increased levels of stress-produced cortisol, aggression and non-compliance for children in daycare and preschool
- World Health Organization’s recommendations on breastfeeding
- the failure of the US Head Start program to improve outcomes for its target population, low income black children
- the failure of the British Sure Start program—how children of teen mums in the program were worse off than they were before
- the \$25M US National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health of 90,000 children which concluded that the feeling of emotional closeness to parents is THE protective factor against top health concerns for teens
- the largest comparative study to date, from Britain, which found that children cared for by their mothers had the best outcomes while children from daycare centres had the worst outcomes at school-entry
- the brain research which demonstrates a direct connection between these high cortisol levels and addictions
- the failure of any study to show any lasting cognitive advantages from daycare or preschool experience

Policy based on mis-information is doomed to failure—we cannot allow this when it comes to our children and families. Thank you.

Ms Tennier will discuss the suppressed information regarding the Swedish daycare system.

Kate Tennier:

katetennier@advocatesforchildcarechoice.ca 416-469-0105 (cell: 416-417-0556)

In our press release we stated that there would be two startling announcements. Helen Ward spoke of our decision to ask for two Auditor General's investigations and I will now tell you of yet another startling and recent development: on the eve of our Canadian government thrusting this unpopular, unexamined and unproven daycare system upon all of us, parents in Sweden are actively working, as we speak, to dismantle their system of universal daycare. Sweden is often used as a *shining example of universal daycare programs* and yet, that country has found such serious flaws and negative returns with their system that a growing number of its citizens and leaders are demanding that childcare must now be based upon equitably funded parental choice.

The groundswell of support for this movement has grown to a loud roar, culminating in a televised debate between members of their national parent's group and their country's version of Ken Dryden. It was roundly acknowledged by the media and others that it was parents who won the day and even though the debate was held as recently as September 27, rapid changes have already started to occur. **As of January 1, 2006, childcare dollars will be directed to parents so that they may be the fulltime caregivers of their own children.** While this is happening in two municipalities in the Stockholm area, Nacka and Sollentuna, seven other such jurisdictions across the country are now looking into how they too can deliver this policy to parents. One Swedish father of three young children told me that, 'in tears, parents are making frantic calls to these two municipalities to find out how they can move their families there to benefit from this new policy.' Another Swedish parent compared this groundbreaking development to the first chink in the ultimately successful dismantling of the Berlin Wall.

Why is it that, in a country with purportedly one of the best universal childcare systems in the world, its citizens want instead to give parents the means to care for their children themselves and/or to direct their care dollars to a person of their own choosing? There are strong political, practical and economic reasons to dismantle their dysfunctional system but none – NONE – are as compelling as the simple fact that universal daycare has proven to be nothing short of a social experiment gone awry, one in which the very people the program is based on, namely children, ended up receiving the brunt of the fall-out from such a seriously ill-conceived policy.

The Swedish parents' group, aptly named, '**A Child's Right to Their Parents' Time**' filed a formal Complaint with the United Nations regarding their country's violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – an initiative we are joining. In that document they list several problems experienced by their young people which often do not show up until their teen years. One child psychologist in that country has gone so far as to refer to this system as being, 'an advanced assault on children.'

And, surprisingly, it is not just parents who are criticizing this system: serious concerns have come from an unlikely place, namely, Sweden's own National Education Ministry, which has noted disturbing outcomes from their daycare system including but not limited to: group numbers for one-to-three year olds as high as 22 children with no mandatory adult-child ratios and the startling admission that the number of children in need of special help has actually grown since their 'childcare and early learning' program was implemented.

Finally, in a significant sidebar - significant for the simple reason that Paul Martin has based this program on the notion that this will be good for the economy- it is routinely acknowledged in Sweden, that their money draining program of bureaucratically run daycare actually drags the economy down. To quote one Swede, a consultant with a background in economics, "The figures I have just given you Kate are interesting in light of the fact that our government for so long has spread the lie that heavily subsidized public daycare is macro-economically profitable and increases employment. It does the very opposite."

So we now ask the big question:

Aside from the fact that these developments in Sweden are yet another example of the 'non-disclosure' by the daycare lobby that Helen Ward has so meticulously outlined, the big question now is: why would we even think of forcing such a system on young Canadian children when it has proven to be so disastrous in Sweden, a country whose 'starting line' was already ahead of ours due to its more equitable income distribution and progressive social welfare policies?

Do we really want to head into the dark ages of daycare when Sweden is just extricating itself from its hold? Do we really need to put one or two generations of our young people through such a regressive program, with the only result being the same negative returns found in Sweden? Do we really want to implement a program based upon cherry picked and 'non-disclosed' research? Do we really want to export, across the country, the Quebec program which has run into massive, uncontrollable cost overruns and which has yet to prove any benefits whatsoever to its citizens?

The National Fund the Child coalition can answer all four of these questions with a resounding, 'NO'. What we do give an emphatic 'Yes' to is a national childcare policy that includes a direct **Child Benefit** – something which is modern, progressive and forward looking, predicated on the principles of **choice and equality**.

Before we take questions, we conclude by clearly stating what we want to see happen. We are calling for:

- 1) A moratorium on the implementation of Paul Martin's National Childcare Program so that we will not need to join Sweden in their **formal complaint to the United Nations**.

- 2) A moratorium on the implementation of Paul Martin's National Childcare Program so that we will not need to ask the **Auditor General** to launch an investigation into the behind the scenes policy making that went into its development.
- 3) A moratorium on **federal funds going to support the 'daycare lobby'** which has only ever represented the views of a very small, very vocal group of daycare advocates who have never worked to ensure that all voices on this issue have been heard.
- 4) We call for a **nationally televised debate** with the Minister of Social Development, Ken Dryden.
- 5) A **Parliamentary Commission** to be set up to examine and report on existing daycare services and systems within Canada.
- 6) And, what we call for mostly is a move to the **new Swedish system** where the inalienable principle of parental choice is both honoured and financially supported. Or, another way of putting it is that we want what the Liberals were actually promoting up until very recently when they took this last minute turn toward universal daycare, namely that, "our caregiving policy should presume that parents are the primary caregivers and that they are in the best position to determine what constitutes the best possible care for their children; it should provide flexibility, options and choices which will make it feasible for either parent to be the caregiver or to be in the paid workforce and it should be fair and equitable and neither penalize nor compel specific caregiving choices." Unbelievably, this indeed was what the Liberals were proposing as recently as December of 1998, when their own *Liberal* 'Ad hoc Study Group on Valuing Caregivers' reported to the National Liberal Caucus Social Policy Committee.

We recognize that this issue will be front and centre in the upcoming election campaign and we intend to work with the political parties who are supportive of our efforts to reinvent the National Child Care program so that choice and equality become its new cornerstones.

We will now take questions. Please state who you would like to direct the question to. If it is a general question, I will direct it to one of our panelists.
Thank you.