

13 March 2006

The Right Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Harper,

The issue of child care affects millions of people in Canada - the children, the parents and the caregivers. The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) has studied the many points of this issue and has developed comprehensive and well-researched policy which supports parents in their search for what's best for their children. We respectfully offer these points for you to consider, confident that you and your Party are also trying to do what is best for Canada's children.

Our top priority is that each child receive the care which best suits the needs of that child - whether in the home or out of it. In the case of out-of-the-home care, the priority is two-fold: that child care be accessible and of the highest quality. Accessible care would include factors of reasonable cost and sufficiency of space in the family's preferred type of care. High quality child care:

- meets the developmental needs of each child,
- includes a range of services to allow for parental choice and the needs of the individual family and
- is sensitive to the cultural requirements of the family (e.g., aboriginal, ethnic custom, religious preference, etc).

Fact: many parents go to amazing lengths in arranging working hours and even change or quit jobs to take care of their own children because they believe they are their children's best caretakers.

Fact: families outside the urban areas have specific needs for childcare which sometimes are different from those of many people in cities.

Fact: parents want and need a fair and effective child care support policy that is flexible enough to fit whatever style of care the parents choose as being best for each child.

Some parents prefer to have their children close to their workplace, and we strongly support any measures the Government might use in subsidy or tax incentives to encourage employer-supported child care centres, either on-site or close to the workplace.

Some parents do tag-team parenting - juggling their work schedules so that one of them is home with the child at all times.

Some parents prefer to have a relative care for their child so that the relative can help them teach important cultural and religious values.

Some children need special care for disabilities.

Some parents want help in providing a suitably stimulating learning environment.

As for the type of facility which should be supported, we believe the child care agreements made between the previous Government and the Provinces should be

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honoured so that required day care spaces may be provided for those parents who want that type of care for their children. We also believe that every parent's choice for the care of his/her child should be equally honoured and supported by our Government.

Equal support might include payment to the parent such as your Government has proposed. It also should include an end to the way that our tax system discriminates against the one-parent-at-home family. A family with one parent earning \$50,000 pays much more in tax than a family with two parents earning a total of \$50,000. There is no logical reason for this unfair tax treatment. In practical terms, the money is earned for the family and the tax is paid by the family, and the single-earner family often gives up many things so that one parent can provide a loving and supportive atmosphere which they believe is best for each child.

We also have in Canada many cases of parenting by grandparents and aunts and other relatives, because the child's parents are out of the picture for some reason. These relatives often face great economic problems because they are trying to raise children (an expensive task) on inadequate income. Canada's child care policy must cover the needs of these substitute parents, as well.

Parents have many ways to care for their children, because children have many diverse needs which must be addressed. The National Council of Women is confident that our Federal Government is creative enough to develop ways to help all parents with the task of raising their children to become healthy, well-adjusted and productive adults in a Canada which leads the way in social and economic stability.

NCWC is a federation of 18 Local Councils of Women, 5 Provincial Councils and 25 Nationally Organized Societies which seeks to improve the quality of life for women, families and society. We hold Consultative Status (General) with ECOSOC and are an Observer Non-Governmental Organization with the Organization of American States.

Sincerely,

Carla Kozak, President

Policies cited: 83.14, 87.11, 89.5, 92.19, 94.4, 94.6, 95.11, 96.9, 01.1