

23 February 2006

The Hon. Diane Finley, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Human Resources & Social Development
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Madame Minister:

As president of the National Council of Women of Canada, I am writing to urge your government to reconsider its decision to cancel after one year the child care agreements which had been worked out with the provincial governments. Those agreements meant that the provinces were able to begin the much-needed expansion and improvement of child care spaces in the provinces. Canceling the agreements at the end of the first year will leave provincial plans in disarray and will leave many Canadian children, especially those in lower income groups, without access to quality child care.

There is general agreement that pre-school children need a safe, supportive and nurturing environment during their early years if they are to reach their full potential in later life. They need a chance to learn physical, mental and social skills and to develop self-confidence. Society looks to all parents to provide this kind of environment, and most of them do; NCWC supports the development of a range of community resources to assist them in this task.

It is a fact, however, that in most families there is no longer a parent at home as a full time caregiver. The majority of parents in Canada - about 70% - now work outside the home at least part-time and in most cases need to make arrangements for their children's care while they work. This need is especially urgent for single parents who must work.

Quality day care means a safe and healthy environment, teachers with backgrounds in early childhood education, enough toys and equipment for creative learning, and an adequate child-teacher ratio. The range of services, especially in urban centres, should include family day care for very young children and flexible hours to accommodate parents who work part-time or shift work. None of this is cheap, but as a society we are investing in the future when we ensure access to quality child care for those children who require it.

We urge your government to reconsider its decision to cancel the child care agreements, and instead to work with the provinces to build on the child care agreements already in place, to ensure equal access to good care for all our children.

Sincerely,

Carla Kozak, President

cc The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister
Members of Parliament