

February 10th, 2011

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) we urge you to insist that HRSDC Minister Diane Finley retract her statement made in the House on Thursday February 3rd accusing parents who chose child care of forcing other people to raise their children. This is an insensitive remark and shows a complete lack of awareness of the difficulties facing parents. It should be apparent that men and women with children struggle to meet their parental responsibilities while working, studying or improving their ability to face the knowledge based society of today. Our members were astounded that any Minister would show such a lack of understanding of modern families.

According to Statistics Canada (2007) labour force participation by mothers in Canada is one of the highest in the world: 69% of mothers with children under 2 are in the workforce and 84% of mothers with children between 6 and 15 are participants. This alone should demonstrate the need for safe, affordable and accessible child care. There is also ample evidence that children benefit from early learning environments where qualified staff are available. To suggest that families 'dump' their children on others to raise is not only absurd but so far from the reality of working parents it cannot be tolerated.

NCWC supports the need for early learning and child care as outlined in the following Policy statement. The following is only one:

RESOLVED, *That The National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to establish a national comprehensive child care policy designed to facilitate the development of child care services and resources which would: 1. be of high quality; and, 2. be available and financially accessible to all Canadian children who need them; and, 3. offer a range of services to allow for parental choice and the needs of individual families; and, 4. be sensitive to the particular cultural requirements of aboriginal and immigrant families; and, 5. meet the needs of children in their own homes as well as children in child care facilities.*

The NCWC urges you as Prime Minister to hold your Ministers accountable, and to have Minister Diane Finley acknowledge the insensitivity and mistake she has made in her comments in the House, and to demonstrate to Canadians that the care of children is important to the Government of Canada by taking seriously the need to develop a child care and early childhood learning system in Canada.

Yours truly,

Mary Scott
President, National Council of Women of Canada
CC The Hon. Rona Ambrose, Min. Responsible for the Status of Women
The Hon. Anita Neville, MP, Liberal Party Critic, Status of Women
Irene Mathysen, MP, NDP Critic, Status of Women