

**DATES & DATA**

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**SEPTEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup>, 2006  
CFUW ONTARIO COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEES**

**Morning Session**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE  
POLICY & ADVOCACY**

Panelists:

- Gordon H. Cleveland, economist and professor in the Division of Management at the University of Toronto Scarborough
- Elizabeth Ablett, Executive Director of the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare.

Both of our panelists emphasized that childcare should be at the forefront in all the upcoming elections.

Gordon Cleveland began the morning session with the statement: "Numbers are important to the study of childcare" and illustrated this opinion with some of the results of his research and analysis on childcare and early learning. In 2006, eight of ten mothers of pre-school children are employed, in comparison to 1973's figure of four of ten. Four-fifths of those mothers used non-parental childcare on a weekly basis. Thus, non-parental childcare is "normative", not exceptional. Childcare takes 5% of families' income on average, but 15% of single mothers' income. While regulated childcare may be measured qualitatively, it is difficult to measure non-regulated childcare. Québec has succeeded in measuring some unregulated childcare and found that 25% was "inadequate", compared to 5% inadequate in the regulated centres.

Professor Cleveland discussed the impact of childcare on mothers' participation in the work force and the impact of adequate childcare on the development of the child. In Québec, there is now universal childcare available at \$5 a day. Their program began in 2001 with four year olds. Now 7% more mothers have joined the labour force since daycare has been available. This work has had a positive impact on families' income, and the greatest impact on women with high school or less education.

Professor Cleveland's research in Canada and long-term studies in the U.S. indicated that a child's cognitive and language skills improved enormously with early childcare, especially in the age three to five group. The economic benefit of \$2 for every \$1 spent is remarkable. The economic benefits are based on the added participation of mothers working, paying taxes, and the economic success of the children who do better in school and life. He sees the current \$1200 per child as the least best option to assist families as it is taxed as income and therefore benefits most the families that have home care. Three to five-year olds need stimulating good care every day, and most families cannot buy this at several thousand dollars annually. We need to fight this issue at the next election, to have federal tax dollars provide universal, accessible, regulated, development-oriented childcare spaces, and then to talk about early childhood learning.

Elizabeth Ablett described the work of the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare, which began in 1981. After the current government cancelled the Liberal plans, the national Code Blue campaign was organized and succeeded in a massive petition, 25 metres long and a letter with 54,000 signatures going to the federal government requesting a national childcare system. The Coalition's strategy is to hold meetings

with politicians locally, create childcare centre networks throughout Ontario, to offer training and other tips to their members on advocacy. They supply data to the media, work with individuals and groups at the grassroots level. Elizabeth Ablett emphasized that the Ontario government promised \$300,000 to childcare from Ontario funds and has not provided this money. She emphasized that childcare should be in the forefront at the municipal, provincial and federal elections in the next few months. We need to return to the idea of bi-lateral, multi-year funding for both capital and operating costs. You may find these two websites useful:

[www.buildchildcare.ca](http://www.buildchildcare.ca) is the Code Blue site

[www.childcareontario.org](http://www.childcareontario.org) is the Coalition for Better Child Care site.

Both groups and individuals may become members of the Coalition. The Coalition needs fees from members to promote their work.

The question period added some ideas:

Non-English speaking children who begin kindergarten and grade 1 need extra help between grade one and three to develop good language skills. It is estimated that without this help, 70% will drop out of high school. Therefore, these children need regulated childcare to get a good start in language skills.

European countries must have 90% of age three, school-age children “covered” by childcare by 2010 (Gordon Cleveland).

The perceived difficulty and expense of having children contributes to our low birth rate.

## **STATUS OF WOMEN & HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE**

### **Afternoon Session**

The Status of Women and Human Rights afternoon session provided a wonderful opportunity for all present to meet each other and discuss a number of topics. First we discussed the morning session of Early Childhood Education and Child Care. It was suggested that the Ontario Council strategize an approach and that a plan of action be developed to ease the current childcare crisis. We wondered if we might develop a coalition of various groups, such as parents, grandparents, women from the working poor, immigrants, community organizations, day care providers, etc. This could become a powerful lobby in dealing with government bureaucracies.

Andrea Levan, RD Ontario North and Professor of Women’s Studies at Laurentian University summarized the work to date of the “Violence Against Women Project” she designed and twenty clubs administered to front-line workers such as social service agencies and police. Those who were interviewed were happy to be involved in the project and the ‘one on one’ nature of the interviews ensured the validity of the project. Andrea said the report would be ready once all interview summaries have been received. Several members took the information necessary to participate in gathering answers to the questionnaire.

Margaret McGovern of the North York club spoke about their upcoming public forum on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 7:30 pm, St. Bonaventure Parish Centre, 1300 Leslie Street. The evening will be devoted to a speaker and discussion of the working poor. A report has been written about the great need for income security for working-age adults, and it will be available just before the November municipal elections. The Women’s Caucus of the Liberal Government is currently studying the document.

A theme of the afternoon was the importance of reminding MP’s, MPP’s and City Councillors about the mandate of CFUW – one of the foremost women’s organizations in Canada. It is critical that we make

politicians aware of our position on various women's issues. Our elected officials need to hear not only from professional women, but also from women in the ranks of the working poor. As CFUW members, we are in a good position to lobby for women and to support local organizations providing assistance to women and girls.

Judie Arrowood, Chair  
Status of Women & Human Rights Committee

## **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

### **Afternoon Session**

Representatives from nineteen CFUW Clubs attended our first meeting on Saturday September 16, 2006. After a brief introduction we discussed early education in Ontario and the impact of the federal government's withdrawal of funding and the effects on the early learning program "Best Start". This is a program to set up 25,000 day-care spots for children. This initiative was to work with children and families to give them the best possible start in life and help them achieve success in school. With the action taken on the high drop out rate of students in the previous year we felt this would help identify at risk children before they enter the primary grades. In conclusion, we will send a letter from our Clubs to our local MPP's and MP's to express our concerns over the present state of limbo that "Best Start" is in.

The standard test Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) was discussed. As the new scores are becoming available, we discussed the advantages and disadvantages to both teachers and students. A number of opinions were heard. In conclusion, we thought, in the future, there should be a review on EQAO.

The Peterborough Club has been very active in an initiative for young mothers. They are very committed with time and money to encourage these young moms to complete their education over four years. Using a mentoring approach they provide parenting skills, tutoring and help with nutrition. We discussed that in the learning environment of today, we need to be proactive for all students and believe in their abilities.

We did a brief overview of the Safe Schools Act and where it stands in regards to the Provincial Government's review. Also mentioned was Bill 52. Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy, introduced this Bill. The Bill centres on keeping students in school until they are 18 to encourage completion of a high school diploma. It also ties in with the Ministry of Transportation to inhibit a student's ability to have or hold a drivers license until they are successful in completing high school.

Our January Standing Committee morning meeting will be centred on Education. At present the *Pathways to Education* program and *Roots of Empathy*, a classroom parenting program, are scheduled to present.

Wendy Taylor, Chair  
Education Committee

## **LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

### **Afternoon Session**

The afternoon session was attended by 29 members representing twenty-two Clubs. Members introduced themselves, identified their Club affiliation, and briefly outlined issues of concern.

I gave a brief report on the annual UN conference for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that I had attended a week before entitled "UN-finished Business",. Its focus on partnerships was a topic on which the national CFUW directors initiated a policy described in the September 2005 *Communicator*.

Susan Pryn of the St. Catharines Club gave an update on the Resolution on Homeless Youth which passed at the national AGM in August, along with background information and copies of the Action Plan.

**Action:** Become aware of the problem in your own community; lobby for more government funds to support agencies working with homeless youth; support the agencies themselves; and encourage partnering among those agencies.

Several members reported on the Local Health Integrated Networks System (LHINS) in their areas. Concerns were expressed regarding

- \* the likelihood of increased privatization in the health field;
- \* the large size of the board and the appointment of board members without health work experience;
- \* the lack of racial diversity in members of the roundtable, and their lack of knowledge of the system
- \* lack of information regarding funding

**Action:** Monitor the LHINS in your area, and ask questions where answers are not forthcoming;

Linda MacGregor of the Etobicoke Club and Ontario Council President discussed pending changes to Ontario's Human Rights Code which lists 15 grounds for charges of discrimination, and provides for civil remedies through financial compensation. Since 1961, the Ontario Human Rights Commission has acted on behalf of the public through mediation, investigation, conciliation, and where necessary litigation through the Human Rights Tribunal. In the 2004-5 year, only 7% of the 2215 complaints needed to be referred to the Tribunal, but the system has been very slow. Now Bill 107 proposes that the filter mechanisms that provided for the intermediary steps have been eliminated and now the complainants will have to fund their own legal representation before the Tribunal.

**Action:** Learn more about the changes. Ask your MPP where the filtering system is described in the Bill, how the proposed legislation will provide information so that systemic discrimination can be assessed, and how previously inadequate funding will be addressed.

Carolyn Day of the Southport Club and a former president of Ontario Council described the Great Lakes Charter Annex Agreement which when ratified will be legally binding for eight states but morally binding for Ontario and Quebec since international agreements cannot be ratified by provinces. Carolyn represents Ontario Council on the Annex Advisory Panel, a partnership of NGOs and academics that has established credibility with the governments involved.

Carolyn outlined problems associated with water: the shift in North American population to the southwest where water is not as plentiful; the 25% increase in the use of water in Canada since 1980; the slow renewal rate of the Great Lakes (1% per year); greater evaporation due to climate change; and increased shipping resulting in more dredging of channels. Fortunately there is a ban on diversion except for Chicago (a grandfathered exception); there is a basic wide environmental standard; and the precautionary principle -- if a proposal looks dangerous but cannot be proved, you don't accept it has been adopted.

The Clean Water Act (Bill 43) will link formerly unlinked legislation regarding water.

**Action:** Clubs are asked to urge local MPPs to support the Clean Water Act, to monitor the Great Lakes Charter Annex Agreement, to ask the local Conservation Authority what preparations are being made regarding this legislation, and to ask the municipality how they are working with the Conservation Authority.

Elaine Harvey, Chair  
Legislation Committee

## **ADVOCACY AWARD WINNERS**

At the September Standing Committees meeting, the following winners of the 2005-2006 Advocacy Awards were announced.

### **Advocacy Excellence Certificates**

CFUW Belleville CFUW Burlington CFUW Hamilton CFUW Oakville CFUW Ottawa UWC North York

### **The Grand prizes**

For Clubs 150+ members CFUW Etobicoke

For Clubs between 50 and 149 CFUW Southport

For Clubs below 50, it was a tie between CFUW Perth and CFUW Barrie

Congratulations to you all and thank you all so much for your work.