



CFUW Ontario Council Submission to the Early Years and Child Care Consultations

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CONSULTATION ON EARLY YEARS AND CHILD CARE STRATEGY

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EMPOWERING THE FUTURE: Best evidence for investing in Early Childhood Education for Canada, a document prepared by researchers and scholars in a variety of fields including economics, psychology, education, health, medicine and the neurosciences agree that high-quality early childhood education results in improvements in scholastic, social, and health outcomes for children and their families, as well as in economic benefits for Canadian society.

Early Childhood in Canada, ecincanada.ca

The **Ontario Council of the Canadian Federation of University Women** (CFUW Ontario Council) would like to applaud the Ontario government for its many initiatives with the Best Start, and Early Years and Child Care agendas:

- A new act - *Child Care And Early Years Act, 2014*, with accompanying *Child Care Centre Licensing Manual, August 2016*
- Placed within the Ministry of Education, now with its own Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care, with a mandate to create “more accessible, affordable, high-quality early years and child care programs for families”¹
- A play-based learning curriculum *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years*
- Added extra resources for before and after school programs for 4-12 year olds
- Poised to add 100,000 new child care spots over the next five years
- And full-day kindergarten for 4 and 5 year olds.

For many years CFUW and its members have been urging governments to consider the importance of the early years and early learning as the foundation for the development of the whole child. Research has demonstrated benefits not only to children and their families but also to a number of societal impacts including but not limited to academic readiness, better school success and lower drop out rates. In addition, developmentally appropriate childcare that engages families is essential to economic prosperity given women began working in larger numbers², now accounting for 48% of the workforce³. To quote the 1994 Royal Commission on Equity in Employment, child care is the ramp that provides equal access to the workforce for mothers.

In 1987 CFUW Ontario Council adopted a policy paper asking for a “program for child care” that would be:

- **“accessible and affordable** to Ontario families no matter what their income, employment status or where they live and work;
- **comprehensive and flexible** enough to meet their families needs;
- **developed with parent and community participation** to meet the social; physical, language and intellectual needs of their children in a caring and safe environment;
- developed to ensure **optimal use of public funds** and **public accountability”**
- **that:**
 - **“the federal government provide direct grants to the provinces”** ; as well as cost-sharing
 - “by way of funding, new **child care services were developed in regions** where child care services are inadequate or non-existent such as rural, remote and native communities”
 - “encourage new services targeted at: **special needs** such as children at risk, disabled children, immigrant groups and teen-age parents”
 - created the “development of **early childhood educational materials** for research”
 - offered “new opportunities for **early childhood education and caregiver training.**”⁴

This concern has continued for our organization, with CFUW now advocating for governments to create “a **quality, universally accessible and comprehensive early learning and child care program which emphasizes the development of the whole child**. Funding for this initiative should involve all levels of government through cost-sharing mechanisms, as in other human services such as health, education and social programs.” (CFUW adopted policy, 2006)

These policy statements, now 30 years and 10 years old respectively, translate into principles that are congruous to the Four Pillars as expressed in *Building a Better Future (2016)*:

1. Universal and equitable accessible. The word “accessible” is of fundamental importance.

Accessible means affordable

As explained in the latest report by Gordon Cleveland, Michael Krashinsky et al⁵ the price of child care matters to the decisions that families make. When the price of licensed care is high, few families are able and/or willing to use licensed care. They then choose either non-licensed care, help from family members (grandparents usually) or untrained babysitters. Many times this results in women or their partners leaving the workforce which affects the caregiving parent’s future earnings, their career path and their pensions.

Ontario and Toronto have the most expensive child care costs in Canada.

There needs to be equal access to affordable child care for all no matter what your income is. Affordability is necessary and important for all, not just “for families that need support”. (The Key Pillars)

Accessible means availability and flexibility

A child care system needs to be available to working parents “no matter where they live and work”. A child care system must acknowledge that many women work part-time⁶; that many hold multiple jobs; that one in four Canadians work shifts;⁷ that these shifts can be unpredictable, especially for minimum wage workers; that, with both the increase in precarious work and the demands of professional work, the hours worked within the day have also become flexible⁸. Working time is no longer 9-5, Monday – Friday.

Flexibility also refers to choice of programs. Some children do better in a home based environment.

Accessible means equitable

A child care system needs to be available to all – those who are at risk as well as those who have been identified as having special needs, be they cultural, emotional, intellectual, or physical.

Accessibility is universal.

2. Quality

Quality means play-based learning with age and culturally appropriate educational materials.

Play-based learning depends on quality resources, inside and outside, toys, books and a range of other materials required for creative learning experiences, that also provide a mix of quiet and active options, in sufficient numbers for all children.

Quality means a stable workforce, well trained in age appropriate pedagogy and care.

A stable relationship with caregivers is essential for young children. In order to have that stability, salaries must be consistent with the professional training, experience and responsibility. Training in evidence-based best practices and ongoing professional development must be offered for staff working in centres or licensed home-based child care. Training should include curriculum that deals with working with and identifying at risk children or children with special needs including training in special needs.

Quality means standards and regulations that must be met before child care centres can be licensed.

Parents need to know that the centre or the home is safe, that play-based learning and care is age appropriate, that there is monitoring and where necessary enforcement of regulations.

3. Funding

Funding means subsidies for families, and the resources for municipalities who are providing those subsidies.

At the time of writing, Toronto has 17,00 children on the waitlist for subsidized child care according to 2015 city statistics.

Subsidy eligibility needs to be updated to allow mothers out of the workforce due to unemployment or maternity leave to continue to allow her child to attend child care, both for the child's stability and growth and for the mother's freedom to search for work.

Funding means stable funding for providers.

The creation of the full day kindergarten was a positive addition for many children, but ultimately created a crisis for child care centres. While we recognize that child care and its service providers are the major focus of this consultation, it must be said continually that accessible child care spaces are not available if no one can afford to provide the service (the flip side of the affordability of spaces for parents.)

Funding means funding.

Establishing and growing a child care system requires money. Convincing governments to allocate money requires political will.

The first option for governments should be cost-sharing mechanisms, similar to other human services such as health, education and social service programs. With more than 60% of Canadian women working⁹ (making up 48% of the workforce), municipal, provincial and federal governments need to recognize that early learning and child care has become an essential service.

At this time 75% of Toronto families cannot afford licensed child care¹⁰.

An early learning and child care program that supports a parent's right to work, contribute through taxes and save for retirement is a fundamental part of a community's social infrastructure. Social infrastructure is more than building homes, hospitals and child care centres; staffing, operating and maintaining this critical service is also a fundamental part of the province's social infrastructure. Not only does a early learning and child care system allow parents to work, it is in itself a job creation program for well-trained educated practitioners.

In summary, a high-quality early years and child care system is all about well-trained, well paid, compassionate and caring staff who are engaged with children and families. Appropriate staffing is combined with an early learning program based on sound pedagogy and funded

through a cost-sharing similar to health. Programs are to be provided by a not-for-profit service provider within a safe environment, structured by evidence-based practice and appropriate regulations.

CFUW ONTARIO COUNCIL

Ontario Council of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) is a voluntary, self-funded, non-profit organization with 54 clubs across the province, which is affiliated with the national CFUW and Graduate Women International.

Our mandate is to promote education and life-long learning, to encourage the participation of members in their communities and to enhance the status of women and girls.

Our main concerns include high quality public education, universal health care, a clean safe environment, the economic security of women as well as the prevention of violence against women.



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¹ Premier's Mandate letter, Education-Early Years and Child Care, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-education-early-years-and-child-care#section-0>

² In 1976, 31.4% of women whose youngest child was less than 6 was in the labour force, by 2009 it was 66.5%. As dramatic was the change for youngest child under 3, from 27.6% to 64.4%. Women in Canada, Paid Work, 2010, pg. 9 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11387-eng.pdf>

³ Statistics Canada, **Labour force, employment and unemployment, levels and rates, by province (Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba) 2016** <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/labor07b-eng.htm>

⁴ CFUW Ontario Council, Child Care-Position Paper, October 1987
<http://www.cfuwontcouncil.ca/resolutions.html#Position>

⁵<https://www1.toronto.ca/City%20of%20Toronto/Children's%20Services/Files/pdf/T/Toronto%20Demand%20&%20Affordability%20Study%20-%20technical%20report%202016.pdf>

⁶ **Statistics Canada. (2010). Paid Work. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Industry. Pg. 13.**

⁷ <https://www.whsc.on.ca/Files/Resources/Hazard-Resource-Lines/Shift-Work-WHSC-Resource-Line.aspx>,

⁸ Sheila Block, A Higher Standard: the case for holding low-wage employers in Ontario to a higher standard, CCPA, 2015 <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/higher-standard>

⁹ Employment rates of women and men, 1976 to 2009. "Paid Work." Statistics Canada, 2010, p.6. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11387-eng.pdf>

¹⁰ Cleveland, Krashinsky, Colley and Avery-Nunez, City of Toronto Licensed Child Care Demand and Affordability Study <https://www1.toronto.ca/City%20of%20Toronto/Children's%20Services/Files/pdf/T/Toronto%20Demand%20&%20Affordability%20Study%202016.pdf> pg. 4