

Securing the Future of Our Children
University of Toronto/RBC Conference
Sponsored by Departments of Economics and Social Work
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This is an annual conference under the auspices of Economics and Social Work. It was an excellent conference. I will watch for next year's program and share the information with the Status of Women & Human Rights Committee.

*Judie Arrowood, Chair,
Status of Women & Human Rights
CFUW Ontario Council*

Professor Michael Baker
RBC Chair in Public and Economic Policy
University of Toronto

**"The Effects of Non-Parental Care:
Evidence from Two Recent Policy Innovations"**

The Province of Quebec daycare system was initially the consequence of a teachers' strike. The universal daycare began from age 4 and now includes even babies. The price was \$5/day and has increased to \$7/day.

When maternity leave was increased from 25 to 50 weeks in 2001,

1. Parental care in the 7-12 month age group increased.
2. Home care tended to replace unlicensed care in someone else's home (as opposed to licensed care in other facilities).
3. There was a modest increase in the duration of breast-feeding.
4. Age at which the child speaks and begins self-feeding comes earlier.

Early family environments are significant predictors of cognitive and social behavioural abilities, but research is necessary to discover specific environmental factors.

Modest price (\$7/day) has led to a dramatic increase of middle and upper income children in care after 12 months. Outcomes include more employment of mothers, more ear/nose/throat infections in children, the family context changes and child development is thought to be enhanced. Here, again, further research is necessary to discover specific environmental factors.

Interpretations seem to indicate there is an increase in hyperactivity among children who spend ages 1-4 in child care.

The audience raised questions. Gordon Cleveland questioned the comparison of PQ data vs. Canada was really a comparison of children in and not in care. Another questioner wondered if negative outcomes might be because of parents working longer hours. Child care hours should be limited.

Professor Faye Mishna
McCain Chair in Child and Family
Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto

**“Keeping Our Children Safe:
Protecting them from Cyber Abuse”**

Grades 4-11:

- 94% go online at home
- 37% own their own computer with internet access
- Spend 2-4 hours online daily (with internet twice as much time)
- 22% have their own web cam
- 86% have email accounts
- 30% have personal websites
- 23% have their own cell phone (56% with text messaging)
- 28% grade 4 students use instant messaging, 43% in Grade 5, 86% by Grade 11

Social networking

‘Doyoulookgood’ is top site for girls in PQ grades 8-11 where they post photos, videos and information and have others vote on their looks. Can search site for people by age, starting as young as 13

Cyber abuse, enabled by the use of the Internet, includes bullying, stalking and sexual solicitation or pornography. The Internet can encourage cyber abuse through a feeling of anonymity, a sense of inescapability and easy access through technology.

Differences between Cyber vs. Traditional Bullying:

<u>Traditional</u>	<u>Cyber</u>
Direct or indirect	Indirect
Mostly on school property	On & off school property
Usually knows the bully	Likely doesn’t know bully
Fear retribution by person	Fear loss of technology and no one can stop it
Who bullies	Further under the Radar

The affects on the children are significant. There are some current studies and parents have stepped up their observation of what children are doing on the Internet. There is much more to do.

Keynote Speaker:

The Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain

“Society’s Role in the Optimal Development of Children”

Ms. McCain presented a strong case for society’s taking an active role in the development of children. Her conclusion is that society’s support is needed. Children that fall behind stay behind. Universal, not just free, early child development and child care centres staffed by professionals are needed. Special needs children must be spotted before those needs are imbedded.

In support of this position she cites research by a variety of experts, for example:

1. One child in six is in poverty.
2. Low-income children are about twice as likely to be vulnerable as their high-income counterparts, but even the latter may be vulnerable.
3. An increase of 10% to family income is equivalent to providing all mothers with secondary education.
4. The first six years of a child's life sets the trajectory for that life.
5. 70% of children have two working parents.
6. Today's parents work 60 hours per week, as opposed to 40 hours per week in the 1950's.

Ms. McCain also said some very positive things about Cuba. It is a leader in the world in early childhood development and human development generally. They have produced low violence, high life expectancy, low ADHD (hyper-activity) problems almost no autism.