KIDS FIRST PARENT ASSOCIATION OF CANADA www.kidsfirstcanada.org 604-291-0088

2009 PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS SUBMISSION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kids First Parent Association of Canada is a national charitable organization supporting optimal child well-being and parental child care since 1987. We are non-sectarian, non-partisan, volunteer run. We receive no funding from government or unions.

We recognize the significant steps taken by the government towards reducing the harmful discrimination against parental determination in child care, those who provide it, and children.

However, non-parental child care/learning continues to receive very significant preferential treatment by all levels of governments. Also, all parties fail to formally recognize in policy that the work of looking after our own children is work, and that the term "child care" includes care by parents.

Current operational definitions of key terms such as "work", "early learning" and "child care" cause untold negative effects. Harms results from the fact that work done by parents – especially women - for their children is treated as if as if it were not work but "leisure", "inactivity" and "a loss". Also, these definitions harm by treating institutional settings as superiour, worthy of billions of dollars more.

Harms include:
For children: "minimal to mediocre" quality care in the majority of licensed daycare inadequate to meet developmental needs; much higher rates of illness; elevated cortisol levels (stress); negative emotional, behavioural and cognitive outcomes; reduced breastfeeding; family financial hardship; peer attachment; parental dis-engagement by dis-valued and stressed parents; lack of parental time and attention can lead to excessive use of 'electronic babysitters' resulting in obesity and peer-attachment.
For parents especially women: coercion regarding care work, child-bearing and breastfeeding choices flowing from government policies to partners and others; low status; disrespect; financial hardship that can be life-long; increased illness spread from daycare; stress; political marginalization; political voice appropriated by others without our consent.
For society and economy: institutional care is far more expensive due to capital, training, infrastructure requirements; increased medical costs; spread of antibiotic-resistant 'superbugs'; children (and later adults) who become peer-attached due to inadequate attachment to caring adults/parents are more likely to bully, more difficult to teach and discipline, more likely to be violent to self and others, and more susceptible to addiction, premature sexual activity, and emotional problems. (see research of Drs. Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Mate)
For the environment: institutional care situations require vast capital and land resources which inefficiently duplicate existing resources (homes, playgrounds); cleaning and disinfecting institutional care settings requires toxic chemicals that family-based care forms do not; reducing our 'eco-footprints' (walking, recycling, reducing, reusing) is very labour intensive work but is compatible through 'multi-tasking' with care work for our own children, provided we have the time and financial support; families that do not need or feel they need two full-time out-of –home jobs drive less.

Recommendations

1 – Improve social, economic, and environmental sustainability by **ending preferential treatment of non-parental child care and early learning, and funding of groups lobbying for it**. Do this by…

2-**enforcing compliance with Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees** of "security of the person" (Section 7), "freedom of conscience and religion" (Section 2a), and "equal protection and equal benefit of the law" regardless of sex, religion, age or disability (Section 15-1): **revise Federal, Provincial and Territorial laws, policies, and practices employing harmful discriminatory definitions** of "work", "child care", "early learning", "child development" and refusing to fund bodies (daycare centres, bureaucracies, research, advocacy, etc) that employ such definitions.

3- transferring all federal funding and tax supports related to child care, child rearing, early learning and child development and the like to a Universal Child Benefit paid directly to parents of children 0-18 through the tax system in the form of an income-based refundable tax credit or a similar mechanism so the maximum benefit for 2 or 3 children is not less than the average full-time Canadian wage.

(We trust readers will forgive any typos and irregularities in this submission as it was prepared while also providing child care and early learning.)

Non-parental child care/learning has received preferential treatment for many years by all levels of government in Canada. This practice derives from false and mis-leading arguments and so-called 'evidence' that amounts to a deliberate campaign of dis-information.

This 'research' is not objective: it is produced by individuals, organizations and 'think tanks' that lobby for these policies on ideological "philosophy" grounds (see http://www.childcarecanada.org/about/hist.html), and/or are involved with using or selling these services, and/or have a vested interest in the wage subsidies and inflated labour supply resulting from preferential treatment of non-parental child care. We are dismayed that these organizations continue to receive our tax dollars.

Example: The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada reports $360,000 in federal funding in its latest Annual Report. The Childcare Federation also reports continued federal funding.

Example: the OECD's oft-cited "dead last" ranking of Canadian expenditures on early childhood education on care was a fabrication. Canada spends .95% of GDP, well above the .2% reported by the OECD. The OECD finding was likely based on information provided in the "Background Report" by Martha Friendly of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit. The calculations for Canada excluded all expenditures other than those on Kindergarten, according to testimony to the Senate Committee on Science, Social Affairs and Technology by Shawn Tupper, Director General of Social Policy at Human Resources and Skills in June 2007.

Example: Statistics Canada March 2006 published a press release stating that "54 percent of children in child care" and buried the actual fact that only 14.9% of children 6 months - 5yrs are in daycare centres on p97 of the un-indexed 99 page study.

Example: We hear repeatedly that "70% of mothers are working full time including mothers of infants and toddlers" (Dr Donna Lero Univ of Guelph "The Current" CBC radio April 2006). This is used as a false proxy measure of demand for daycare. But this 70% refers to the catch-all 'Labour Force Participation' rate, not work. LFP includes doing any part-time paid work, unpaid work in family enterprise, on parental leave, looking for a job, doing any paid work with one's children present.

Examples of vested-interest and ideologically motivated providers of non-objective, non-peer reviewed 'research': High/Scope Foundation in the US, Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, Canadian Childcare Federation, Fraser Mustard's Council on Early Development, the World Bank, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Human Early Learning Partnership, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, RAND Corporation.

Very little if any their evidence is published in peer reviewed academic journals.

Example: the oft-cited 'finding' - held out as a vague promise in Charles Pascal's report to the Premier of Ontario on implementing all day kindergarten and elsewhere - that over $17 were saved for every $1 spent on the 1962 Perry Preschool Program was the creation of Steve Barnett and was published by his organization, the of High/Scope Foundation. However, Dr James Heckman, Nobel prize for economics recipient cited as supportive of funding 'universal' daycare/preschool, found only a $1.16 return, not $17+. He states: "Advocates and supporters of universal preschool often use existing research for purely political purposes."

Their own policy recommendations frequently are not supported by their 'findings'.

Example: Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain's "Early Years Study" uses evidence of the benefit of maternal care from animal studies (such as rats licking their pups) and concludes that we need to provide all day daycare.

Example: leading lobbyists (eg. Gillian Doherty, Christine Japel) find that high quality daycare that actually supports children's development is not common and that poor quality care can harm children, yet ask for creation of more spaces at the current level of harmful quality.
Promoters routinely misrepresent, ignore, or suppress empirical evidence published in peer-reviewed journals, by governments, and even their own evidence if it contradicts their policy objectives.

Example: Swedish government reports finding serious problems with the quality of daycare there, far higher (6X) rates of illness among children in daycare centers), rising youth suicide and youth violence, and rising domestic violence against women, and below-Canada OECD PISA academic test scores are not discussed by Canadian daycare lobby/research bodies which routinely cite Sweden as model.
(see chart http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/Publicerat/2008/10130/2008-126-1.htm "Smitta i förskolan" = "Contagion in preschool" p.18, and see "Young Swedes' mental health deteriorating: report" 25 Mar 09 in The Local- Swedens' News in English http://www.thelocal.se/18444/20090325/, and see OECD PISA score rankings chart http://www.cdnsba.org/newsflash/releases/Myths%20and%20Facts%20About %20Fin
land%20Feb%206%20%2709.pdf)

Example: Martha Friendly's staff:child ratio recommendations in new report, "Ratios for four and five year olds:What does the research say? What else is important?" (http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/pdf/BN_ratios.pdf) fails to mention the peer-reviewed evidence, re-published elsewhere by her, showing that, at the ratios she recommends, 50% of children are "not receiving adequate caregiving" and "not receiving developmentally appropriate activities" (see chart The Great Child Care Debate www.childcarecanada.org/resources/CRRUpubs/op7/7op7.html p.44)

Example:
- Clyde Hertzman and his organiztion, HELP, lobby for more 'ECEC' services, especially daycare centres, yet he reports that it has little effect: "OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS: Results of our analyses suggest that … following the introduction of control variables, **participating in early childhood care and education programs and services at the age of 2 and 3 had little direct association with children's home and school outcomes in Kindergarten**. The sole exception to this general pattern occurred for participation in 'other' [such as parent-child drop ins] early education programs." *(see* HELP, "*The association of early childhood care and education to children's experiences in Kindergarten*" February 2006, by Dafna Kohen, Garth Lipps, and Clyde Hertzman This key finding is buried on page 17 where you may not dig to find it.)

The preferential funding of non-parental child care/learning and the funding of those lobbying for it are both harmful to the economy and the society.

HARMS TO SOCIETY: MISOGYNY NOT WOMEN'S EQUALITY

-women who choose child care of any form other than full-time daycare center from birth to age 12 (or 16 in the case of the Child Care Expense Deduction) receive **far less public funding**, especially the choice to look after one's own children

-women who choose to work providing uncommodified care to their children (or others needing care) are systemically under-financed and their massive contribution to the society and economy treated as non-existent and described officially as "inactivity" "non –work " "leisure" and even called **"a loss"** by Canada's top tax-funded daycare economists, Cleveland and Krashinsky.

-Preferential funding of non-parental child care actively **coerces** women financially and socially into spending more time at 'jobs' than they would freely choose.

-**Corporate welfare** and **McJobs for mums**: Preferential treatment of non-parental child care acts as a "low wage subsidy" by interfering with market forces and artificially lowering the price of mothers' work and artificially increasing the labour supply available to employers and thus (according to the 'law of supply and demand') lowering pressure to increase wages generally.

-This policy treats women as **second-class citizens**, as '**parasites**' in Betty Friedan's term. It is misogynistic and regressive. the "trickles down" effect lowers the status of these women in the eyes of fathers, children, and others and even in their own eyes.

CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

We frequently hear of studies that show that children benefit from "high quality early learning and child care". Of course this is true: children die without care and are learning before they are born. Kids First strongly supports high quality care and learning. However, such undefined – or catch-all - terms are meaningless.

PHYSICAL HEALTH
-increased rates of and worse illness among children in daycare centres is not disputed.

-Baker/Milligan/Gruber's award winning peer-reviewed research found higher levels of child and parent illness following introduction of the $5/day system in Quebec

EMOTIONAL HEALTH
-**increased levels of cortisol** in children found in daycare centres. Elevated cortisol is associated with stress. Cortisol is a key factor in the development of the immune system, impulse control and emotional functioning

BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES
-"**Pro-social behaviour scores were lowest for children in licensed day care and highest for children in unregulated home care and relative care**" (Statistics Canada "National Data Sets: Sources of Information for Canadian Child Care Data" p.14) reports Clyde Hertzman of the Human Early Learning Partnership which lobbies for centre-based care,

-The US National Institute for Child Health and Human Development found that - regardless of quality - more children in centre-based care exhibited aggression, cruelty, non-compliance (not only 'assertiveness'). Longer hours (higher "dosage") in centre-based care were associated with higher levels of problem behaviour. These elevated levels of problem behaviour were unique to centre based care. These levels continued unabated to at least grade six (last round of study report available at http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org/NICH-study.pdf).

-High quality child care – as measured by child-adult interaction: "The highest level of positive caregiving was provided by in home caregivers, including fathers and grandparents, caring for only 1 child, closely followed by home based arrangements with relatively few children per adult. The **least positive caregiving was found in center based care with higher ratios** of children to adults."
(see Characteristics and quality of child care for toddlers and preschoolers. Applied Developmental Science, 4. http://secc.rti.org/abstracts.cfm?abstract=17)

COGNITIVE OUTCOMES/ 'SCHOOL READINESS'
-Studies show that higher quality non-maternal care has only modest effects:
"Thus, the argument that child-care quality affects child outcomes was only partially supported by this investigation."
(see Does quality of child care affect child outcomes at age 4 ½?. Developmental Psychology, 39 http://secc.rti.org/abstracts.cfm?abstract=40)

-"Contrary to expectations, limited evidence was found to suggest child care experiences moderate the negative associations between family risk and child outcomes."
(see The interaction of child care and family risk in relation to child development at 24 and 36 months. Applied Developmental Science, 6 http://secc.rti.org/abstracts.cfm?abstract=28)

-after over a generation of universal daycare, Swedish academic performance has plummeted. 15 years olds' performance on the OECD's academic test scores is well below Canadian teens.