

KIDS FIRST PARENT ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS 2008

INCLUSION, EQUALITY, EMPOWERMENT & SUSTAINABILITY
POLICY FOR FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN (FDCs)

HIGHLIGHTS:

INCLUSION

I – INCLUSIVE DEFINITIONS of CHILD CARE and WORK

EQUALITY

II – EQUALITY - UN compliance; state neutrality, no preferential treatment

III – FULL EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

IV - FUND THE CHILD – modernize FDC support, Universal Child Benefit

V – GIFTS TO FAMILIES GIVEN CHARITABLE TREATMENT

EMPOWERMENT

VI - BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD determined by parent; abandon OECD policy; recognize developmental science

VII – DEMOCRACY - end funding to daycare lobby, reflect public will

VIII – ACCOUNTABILITY of gov't agents for policy effects & information

SUSTAINABILITY

IX- REPLACE THE GDP

X – A *HOLISTIC AGENDA FOR FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN* – sustainability and habitat.

INCLUSION

I- DEFINITIONS:

CHILD CARE: current definitions [1] found in child care legislation and policy regarding **funding** discriminate against parental care and against all forms of care other than full-time centre-based daycare from birth. This definition creates **systemic discrimination** by excluding the vast majority of families when discussing caring for children.

WORK: Statistics Canada does not define “work” in oft-cited “Labour Force Survey” [2] or other data. Current operational definitions discriminate against those doing unpaid/low-paid care work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Adopt the following **inclusive definitions**:

*CHILD CARE: “the care of a child”

*EARLY LEARNING, CHILD DEVELOPMENT: “the learning and development of a child.”

*EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: “educational opportunities for young children”

*WORK: Operative definitions must cease to discriminate against care-work, specifically: parental care and rearing of children is to be recognized in legislation and policy as work.

EQUALITY

II – EQUAL TREATMENT of FAMILIES, PARENTS & CHILDREN

The Canadian Charter, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [3] are violated under current ‘child care’ related policy. Daycare lobby academics have ignored the pre-eminence given to the parent-child relationship in the UN documents.

From the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*:

Preamble – “Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community...”

-“Recognizing that the child...should grow up in a family environment...”

3,1 – “the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”

2,1 - “States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth ... without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's ... political or other opinion, ...social origin, property, ... or other status.”

5 - “States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents”

7,1 - 1 “The child has the right to ... be cared for by his or her parents.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

1-The Federal government will set up a body to ensure that polices federally and provincially comply with these documents. Provinces must not be allowed to discriminate against parental care.

2-There shall be **no preferential treatment** for any form of child care.

3-**State neutrality** regarding child care decisions (see Lib. Party 1997-98)[4]

III – FULL EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

Full equality for women will not be achieved until the socially essential care work largely done by women as mothers is **financed on a par with other activities** financed by the state. This applies to all socially essential care-work performed outside the GDP sector by anyone. Now but not in the past the state finances many activities that are cultural, aesthetic, desirable, or compensatory but not essential. This is being done at the expense of financing essential care work. We must re-prioritize essential work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Adopt full equality for women.

IV - FUND THE CHILD

The system of economic support for families with dependent children (FDCs) must be modernized. The current parental/maternal ‘sacrifice’ paradigm is historically unprecedented. It will be abandoned in favour of a **reciprocity-based model** of cost sharing. The goals of inclusion, equality, and empowerment can only be achieved through direct funding of FDCs.

In the past almost all adults became parents. FDCs were targeted for economic support: ‘family wage’ and benefit legislation, welfare/widows’ pensions until youngest child reached 16, veterans’ benefits, low mortgage rates, tax deductions, tax-exempt children’s clothes, birth bonus (Que), substantial spousal exemption, etc. Now, the birthrate is at an unsustainable low, and ‘breeding pairs’ are fewer. The former direct supports to FDCs are radically reduced. Meanwhile expectations of parents’ care are at an all time high regarding supervising, transporting, equipping, monitoring, educating, entertaining, housing, protecting, etc. **So far fewer people are bearing the costs; costs are up; and support is down.** That is the crisis.

All benefit from the raising of the next generation, so all should equitably share the costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1-All public funding intended to support children’s care and learning should ‘flow with the child’, that is, be paid directly to parents. This frees up billions and includes:

- agreements and transfers related to daycare, preschool, child development; daycare on/off reserves and military bases
- welfare for FDCs

- Child Care Expense Deduction, spousal/equivalent to spouse credit, Universal Child Allowance, CTB, NCB, NCBS

- related provincial and municipal expenditures and benefits
- EI for maternity and parental leave
- kindergarten other than half-day for age 5
- funding for related bureaucracy, research and lobbying bodies

2-A **Universal Child Benefit (UCB)** from age 0-17 administered by Revenue Canada in the form of a **Refundable Tax Credit** is one possible method. This not a 'tax deduction' that discriminates in favour of higher-income families, but rather use of the tax system's income-redistribution powers to transfer income from non-FDCs to FDCs.

3-The purpose of the UCB is to spread the true costs of child-rearing over society as society as a whole requires and benefits from child-rearing. Thus it is two-fold:

- to financially compensate care-work itself
- to provide assistance with other child-related expenditures (shelter, food, learning, transportation, etc).

4-The UCB will be paid to a designated parent/guardian for children age 0-17. In joint-custody situations it will be split as per parental agreements.

5-The **dollar amount** of the benefit would reflect the degree of compliance and commitment to the Charter and UN guaranteed rights to full equality for women as mothers and for children. Full equality for women will not be achieved unless the UCB amount ensures that child-rearing is financed on a **par with other activity financed by taxes**. Therefore:

- Full Time Equivalent child-rearing responsibilities would be supported by a UCB equivalent to an average FTE compensation package. (note: \$43,489 was average FTE salary/wage 2000 [12]).
- FTE would be determined based on number and possibly age of children and the UCB would be 'pro-rated' accordingly.
- The UCB could be not be taxable as it is not only intended to provide compensation for care-work (which would reasonably be taxed), but also to assist with child-related expenditures. Non-FDCs do not have the same expenses as FDCs, and therefore are at a very significant economic advantage over FDCs, even though they benefit from the child-rearing work and expenses FDCs.

However, if we intend to abandon the goal of equality for women, at a minimum all current federal, provincial and municipal expenditures and benefits related to child care and learning (see 'I-1') would be consolidated and applied to a **non-taxable progressive, universal benefit** administered by Customs and Revenue Canada.

- At a minimum, the maximum amount should be higher than the combination of: the Child Tax Benefit, the National Child Benefit Supplement, Provincial amounts related to the CTB/NCB, and current amount paid to single parents on social assistance.

6-Provinces, municipalities, reserves and military bases wishing to continue providing daycare, pre-kindergarten, etc., would be able to do this out of the fees paid by parents – which would be much higher to reflect actual total costs. Parents would have much more funding at their disposal to pay these fees. Far more cash would be freed for non-parental care-workers wages.

V – GIFTS TO FDCs ELIGIBLE FOR CHARITY TREATMENT

In the past all types of gifts were treated equally; none received a tax benefit - a form of tax-subsidy. But currently, family care and much teaching/learning is discriminated against because other institutions doing similar functions can give tax receipts. Modernizing the FDC support system requires recognizing and encouraging wealth sharing by extended family and others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

*Gifts to Families with Dependent Children (and to families living with disabled adult members) would be eligible for charitable tax credits. This income would be receipted and declared by recipients.

EMPOWERMENT

VI - BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD

The daycare lobby, the OECD, the European Commission, and the World Bank are currently driving the architecture of family/child policy in Canada, not the Canadian electorate, parents, or the best interests of children.

The European Commission explicitly **rejects empirical evidence** from developmental science and attachment theory. [5] (This theory states that optimal child development requires sensitive responsive care by one or a few adults who are attached and attuned to the individual child.) Rejecting this concept is done to justify unsound child:staff ratios and preferential treatment for daycare centres.

In the name of “reconciliation” of “work and family” the OECD is advancing **de-funding families** and transferring funding to daycare. This is based on two dove-tailed goals:

- 1- “Shared Responsibility” means increasing **state-intervention** in the family [6].
- 2- “**Labour Force Attachment**” is promoted over **parent-child attachment**. [7] It is a form of ‘**corporate welfare**’. It means taxes subsidizing low wage work through cheap/free daycare, expanding the commodified care sector, and expanding the labour pool to benefit business interests.

The World Bank wants to “merge business and social ways of thinking” in the “**business imperative**” [8] for early childhood development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 – Abandon the OECD, European Commission, and World Bank child and family policy recommendations.

2 - The **best interests of the child** shall be the basis of policy.

3 – **Parental determination** of the best interests of the child: parents are in the best position to determine their children’s best interests.

4 - Quality care: incorporation of **evidence from developmental science**:

Regulations for those operating daycares and education for children shall be based on the findings of developmental science. In particular, staff: child ratios and group sizes in daycares must not compromise children’s developmental and health needs to other considerations.

VII – DEMOCRACY

Decision-making must be based on democratic processes.

Parents are not “stakeholders” or a “special interest group.” They alone have **personal legal responsibility** for children: policy advisors, teachers, unions, businesses, etc. do not share this liability and therefore must not be given equality let alone precedence to parents in policy development under the rhetoric of “Shared Responsibility”. Prioritizing care-work means parents lack time and mobility to participate in public “child care” consultations, especially when these exclude parental care and are very selectively publicized.

Meanwhile, daycare lobby groups opposed to equal treatment of parental care have been created and heavily funded by government [9]

RECOMMENDATIONS

1-TERMINATE LOBBY FUNDING: public funding of the daycare lobby, and of biased research within government must cease. HRSD money and funds from Canadian Institutes for Health Research is/has been used for this. “Centres for Excellence” in child care (such as the Human Early Learning Partnership at UBC) engage in lobby work. Statistics Canada can provide statistics if needed rather than the (formerly tax-funded) Childcare Resource and Research Unit which is openly philosophically biased.

2-PUBLIC WILL: **Polls & surveys** that use language with **clarity** can be used to determine **public and parents’ preferences**.

VIII – ACCOUNTABILITY

Policy decision-making must be based on full and accurate information. This condition is not met in the formulation of current child care policy.

ACCURATE & COMPLETE INFORMATION, DUE DILIGENCE, LIABILITY: Empirical evidence essential to the understanding the well-being of children has been ignored and suppressed while data used to support the policy is grossly misrepresented. Internationally renowned child development scientist, Penelope Leach, calls this a “**cover-up campaign**.”[10] The policy resulting from flawed data has entirely predictably created conditions for infants and children linked to demonstrated harm (e.g. higher levels of infection and aggression for children in daycare). Also, the inequity caused by the policy has resulted in adverse effects, especially for low-income single parent families.[11]

Also, parents and others have the right to INFORMED CONSENT when making making decisions for their children and families. The dis-information provided with government funding violates this principle.

Civil servants and recipients of public funding have an obligation to do due diligence in providing **objective, accurate and complete information** in an area as **fundamental to our society’s well-being** as the care of children. We cannot afford to experiment with unproven and dis-proven theories in this area. Policy based on flawed data and flawed theories regarding children’s development can prove socially and financially disastrous, as in Residential Schools.

There is a clear need to avoid **costly future litigation** against governments that violate rights and cause harm. Government has already had to compensate for discrimination vs family care of disabled in BC. [13]

RECOMMENDATIONS

1-Issue an apology to Canadians for misuse of tax dollars, and mis-information on these issues.

2-Policy creators and advisors failing to do due diligence must be held personally accountable and **legally liable** for the consequences of the policy they create.

3-Those providing misleading data must be **disciplined**.

4-Publication and distribution of a “CHILD CARE DATA REVISITED REPORT” will help compensate for this practice.

5-Announce a public apology for the long-standing discrimination and mis-information and the resulting ill-effects in conjunction with the release of the above report.

SUSTAINABILITY

IX- REPLACE THE GDP

The GDP/GNP excludes most socially essential care work from economic/social measures. Yet it includes socially harmful activities and compensatory efforts. Applying this measure has resulted in regressive, perverse social-economic policy, and distorted governmental goals. It renders invisible an economic sector recently evaluated in Britain to be worth more than the entire GDP. It has caused systemic discrimination against non-GDP care-workers - especially women as mothers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

*Adopt more appropriate measures: the Genuine Progress Index has been suggested by many as a more useful measure.

X – A “HOLISTIC AGENDA FOR FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN (FDC)”

In child-rearing, we perform biological-cultural functions comparable to the functions of ecosystems. These are the sub-systems upon which all other systems depend. Industrial-commercial expansion and related societal trends have affected child-rearing conditions. Policy has not kept up with the need to protect the child-rearing sub-system. It needs to be modernized. A *Holistic Agenda for FDCs* would include I-IX (above) and pro-actively address the need to preserve, support and enhance the conditions necessary for sustainable, optimal child-rearing. By “conditions” we mean the inter-related physical and social-cultural habitat FDCs require to function optimally.

It is only the state that has the power to create the required legislation to support the conditions and habitat that FDCs require.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1-FDC-sustaining habitat must be counted as essential core national sub-system requiring protection similar to the natural environment.

2-Adopt a *Holistic Agenda for FDCs* that addresses but is not limited to:

-**Adoption of “FDC” as a key term in policy** and statistics. The term is necessary as it:

- *embeds children in their lived legal family-unit context thus avoiding marginalization of parents
- *clarifies a key sub-group of family types that is currently made invisible in all-inclusive “family” statistics

-**FDC Impact Assessments** (similar to environmental impact assessments) for proposed legislation

-Adopt the **Precautionary Principle** in policy regarding children/families.

-**FDC Physical Habitat upgrading:**

- *toxins in products and environment which create illness, allergies and dangers to children and pregnant/nursing women; and damage reproductive ability
- *traffic dangers to children

-**FDC Social-Cultural Habitat upgrading:**

- *development of a ‘breast-feeding culture’
- *adoption of WHO “Baby Friendly Hospital” guidelines
- *concerns about pedophilia, child pornography, and molestation which cause massive restrictions on children’s mobility and burden parents’ with excessive supervision.
- *elimination of advertising targeting children (restrictions were abandoned in the 1980s)

NOTES

* from the “Final Report of the Sub-Committee on Tax Equity for Families with Dependent Children of the Finance Committee 1999” <http://www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDOc/36/1/STFC/Studies/Reports/finarp19/08-rape.htm>

** see data compilation by Kid First “Fact & Fiction, Ideologies & Agendas” sections III, IV, V, VIII, IX
<http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org/daycarerecommendations.pdf>

[1] examples of child care definitions excluding parental care:

- in “Investments” section of Early Learning and Child Care Agreements in Principle 2005

http://www.sdc.gc.ca/en/cs/comm/sd/news/agreements_principle/index.shtml

-in BC law: “the care and supervision of a child other than by (a) the child's parents”.

BC Benefits - Child Care - Act, definitions <http://www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/PUBLICAT/VOL1/Part3/3-6.htm>

-Revenue Canada: receipted non-parental care for 2-income or single parent families only.

[2] Definitions used in Statistics Canada's work data: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/71-222-XIE/2004000/glossary.htm>

[3] UN Convention on the Rights of the Child “...recognizing that the child... should grow up in a family environment” “1. The child shall have... the right to ... be cared for by his or her parents.”

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

[4] Liberal Party policy 1997-98

-“From pensions for "stay at home mums" to beer and popcorn: How the Liberal party reversed its policy on children and families” <http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org/liberal-reversal.htm>

-"Final Report of the Sub-committee on Tax Equity for Families of Dependent Children of the Finance Committee" 1999

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDOc/36/1/STFC/Studies/Reports/finarp19/08-rap-e.htm>

-"Report of the Ad Hoc Study Group on Valuing Caregivers to the National Liberal Caucus Social Policy Committee," 1998.

[5] Rejection of empirical evidence and attachment theory by OECD, European Commission and Canadian daycare researcher-lobbyists

- “The OECD and the Reconciliation Agenda: Competing Blueprints,” R. Mahon

<http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/op20/op20.pdf> p4

-“Values and Beliefs in Caring for Babies and Toddlers” CRRU Fact Sheet - Helen Penn

<http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/fs/fs7.pdf>

-“A Framework for Quality: A European Perspective” Helen Penn for The European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment with Family Responsibilities

<http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/fs/fs6.pdf>

-“Briefing Notes: Quality targets in services for young children” - Child Care Resource and Research Unit Univ of Toronto www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/pdf/BN_qualityservicetargets.pdf

[6] the “*ideology of the family*” is a problem and must be replaced by “*a new order. This includes deep changes in societies in general and in the family's structure in particular...a review of the family-state relationship regarding the responsibility for the care and education of children.*”

-“An Integrated Approach to Early Childhood Education and Care: A Preliminary Study”<http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/op16/op16.pdf>, p. 3,6,9

[7] “POST-MATERNALISM” is the name for the OECD-generated policies under which funding for families has been cut and shifted to funding for daycare. The intent is to promote “*a greater role for the state*” and “*interventions earlier in life*” by “*redefin[ing] equity*” so as to create more “*flexible labour markets*” and “*(directly or indirectly) subsidizing low wage employment (‘welfare in work’)*”.

“The OECD and the Reconciliation Agenda: Competing Blueprints,” R. Mahon

<http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/op20/op20.pdf> p9-11

[8] Speech to World Bank by RBC Vice President 2005

video <http://www1.worldbank.org/hdnetwork/External/cy/ccoffey.htm>

text: <http://www.rbc.com/newsroom/20050928coffey.html>

[9] "Parent group says government must cut funding to daycare lobby now"

<http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org/releaseapr242006.htm>

[10] Dr. Penelope Leach quoted in *The Daycare Deception* by Brian Robertson

[11] Poor quality and its effects; child:staff ratios

Canada

- "*The majority of children age 0-12 in centres do not receive adequate amounts or types of experiences to promote language and cognitive development*" -Gillian Doherty presentation "Quality & Predictors of Quality in Canadian Child Care" Centre for Excellence for Early Childhood Development, Regina June 2005

http://www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca/documents/Gillian_Doherty_ANG.pdf p.4

- "*You Bet I Care! 2*" p. ix-x http://action.web.ca/home/cfwwb/attach/ybic_report_2.pdf

- "'Appropriate' Staff: Child Ratios in 'Quality' Daycare: A Politically Sensitive Topic"

<http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org/blog-vol2.htm>

- "Daycare staff:child ratios & 'quality': bad and getting worse"

<http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org/blog-vol3.htm>

Quebec

- "Reality Check on Quebec Daycare: Research Finds Low Quality, High Costs, Negative Outcomes, Worse Family Finances"

<http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org/quebec-reality-check.htm>

- "Quality Counts! Assessing the Quality of Daycare Services Based on the Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development," Dec 2005, by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP)

<http://www.irpp.org/choices/archive/vol11no5.pdf>

- "Universal Childcare, Maternal Labor Supply and Family Well-Being" by Michael Baker (University of Toronto), Jonathan Gruber (MIT) and Kevin Milligan (University of British Columbia)

<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/cepa/childcare.oct2005.final2.pdf>

- "Quebec Family Policy: Impact and Options," Robert Baril, Pierre Lefebvre and Philip Merigan

<http://www.irpp.org/choices/archive/vol6no1.pdf>

Sweden

- "Swedish Government Report Critiques Daycare Conditions"

<http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org/blog-vol1.htm>

[12] Average Wages "Number and Average Wages and Salaries..."

Statistics Can 97F0019XCB2001060

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/themes/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?Temporal=2001&PID=57116&GID=355313&METH=1&APATH=3&PTYPE=55496&THEME=53&AID=0&FREE=0&FOCUS=0&VID=0&GC=0&GK=0&SC=1&SR=1&RL=0&CPP=99&RPP=9999&D1=0&D2=2&D3=1&D4=5&D5=0&D6=0&d1=0&d2=0&d3=1&d4=0&d5=0>

[13] Hutchinson vs BC Ministry of Health

[http://www.bchrt.bc.ca/decisions/2004/pdf/Hutchinson_v_BC_\(Ministry_of_Health\)_\(No_2\)_2004_BCHRT_122.pdf](http://www.bchrt.bc.ca/decisions/2004/pdf/Hutchinson_v_BC_(Ministry_of_Health)_(No_2)_2004_BCHRT_122.pdf)