



Stepping Up for Child Care



**Report of the joint OCBC and CUPE campaign
on provincial downloading of child care**



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Executive Summary

In the spring and early summer of 2001, representatives from the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and the Canadian Union of Public Employees took to Ontario's roads to bring together child care activists in 11 communities. The goal: to learn about and develop ways to fight the detrimental effects of provincial funding cuts and downloading on child care.

Under downloading, municipalities now have increased funding obligations without the money to provide adequate child care services to their communities. The federal government gave Ontario \$114-million for early child development services this year and none of the money went to licensed child care.

At workshops and forums held in Dryden, Kingston, Niagara, Oshawa, Ottawa, Pembroke, Peterborough, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Toronto and Windsor over the past year, child care providers, parents and advocates came together to say: "Enough is enough. We are not going backwards anymore. We are Stepping Up for Child Care."

What we found

Municipal centres fight threats

In 1997, 69 Ontario municipalities directly operated 197 child care programs. Now, municipalities are being encouraged by provincial downloading to get out of running child care centres in order to cut costs.

Directly operated municipal centres have historically delivered services to families who could not afford child care, thereby providing children in disadvantaged areas with access to high quality care. These centres also often have high ratios of children with special needs.

Inadequate services

In every community visited by the campaign tour, there is not enough high quality, regulated child care to meet the diverse needs of families.

Less support for children with special needs

Downloading has meant that the most vulnerable children – those with special needs – have even less chance than before to get the support they need.

Tensions in schools

Provincial government changes that removed child care from the education funding formula have resulted in reduced caretaking services, new maintenance fees, huge rent increases, loss of space and the threat of eviction.

Playground woes

Most programs have received no government money to bring child care centre playgrounds up to new safety standards and centres have been forced to raise funds or dismantle their equipment.

The pressures on families

Affordability

Most parents can't afford full fees for quality child care. For society child care is a sound investment. For every dollar invested in high quality child care, there's a \$2 benefit to children, parents and society. Child care subsidies – the major source of funding that helps parents afford high quality care while they work or study – have become harder and harder to access.

High quality child care good for children and parents

The percentage of mothers with young children who work outside of the home has increased dramatically in the past 20 years. Workforce participation of mothers in two-parent families with children aged 3-5 alone has climbed to 68 per cent.

Quality child care is necessary to enable mothers to work with peace of mind. One study found that 35 per cent of women workers reported finding balancing work and family so stressful that it interfered with their concentration at work either constantly or frequently.



The pressures on child care staff

Low wages. Inadequate benefits. High turnover rates. The expectation to be caregivers, parents, counsellors and more. Low wages top the list of reasons child care workers leave their field. Child care teachers earn an average wage of \$22,717 a year across Canada. Yet 82 per cent of centre staff have at least one year of post-secondary specialized education, while 75 per cent have a two-year college credential or university degree.

Wage grants

In most communities visited, wage levels were high on the list of frustrations. Wage grants make up about 20 per cent of a child care program's budget and provide programs with their only source of stable funding. They are the only way for programs to attract quality staff without increasing parent fees.

Pay equity

The Conservative government has refused to fund pay equity adjustments beyond December 31, 1998, leaving child care programs with the legal obligation to pay equity increases. The Canadian Union of Public Employees and other unions have launched a Charter challenge against the Conservative government for its refusal to fund pay equity.

Conclusion

There's no question that the battle for high quality, affordable and accessible child care in Ontario is far from being won. The campaign received an overwhelmingly positive response in the communities it visited. Here is what we were told is needed:

- Develop a Quebec-style child care program that provides affordable, high-quality regulated child care
- Maintain municipal child care centres
- Allocate a fair portion of the federal Early Childhood Development Initiative funds to regulated child care
- Allocate more funding for children with special needs
- The province must meet its pay equity obligations
- Improve wages and working conditions for child care workers

The challenge now is to build on that momentum and deliver a strong, grassroots-based message to governments that they have a responsibility to "step up" for the province's children, who are our future workers, parents and voters.

Stepping Up for Child Care

Report of the joint OCBCC and CUPE campaign on provincial downloading of child care

In the spring and early summer of 2001, representatives from the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and the Canadian Union of Public Employees took to Ontario's roads to bring together child care activists in eleven communities. The goal: to learn about and develop ways to fight the detrimental effects of provincial downloading on child care.

In Dryden, Kingston, Niagara, Oshawa, Ottawa, Pembroke, Peterborough, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Toronto and Windsor, child care providers, parents and advocates came together to say: "Enough is enough. We are not going backwards anymore. *We are Stepping Up for Child Care.*"

"There was a real need to find a way for people in the sector to come together to talk about the problems they were facing every day because of these policy and funding changes, to develop strategies for action and to build advocacy skills," said OCBCC executive director Mary-Anne Bédard.

The Stepping Up for Child Care campaign grew out of concerns that the not-for-profit delivery model of child care

in Canada was being threatened by shifting child care policies in several provinces. Ontario was particularly worrisome, because provincial downloading and funding cuts would inevitably put pressure on already strained child care programs and municipal budgets.



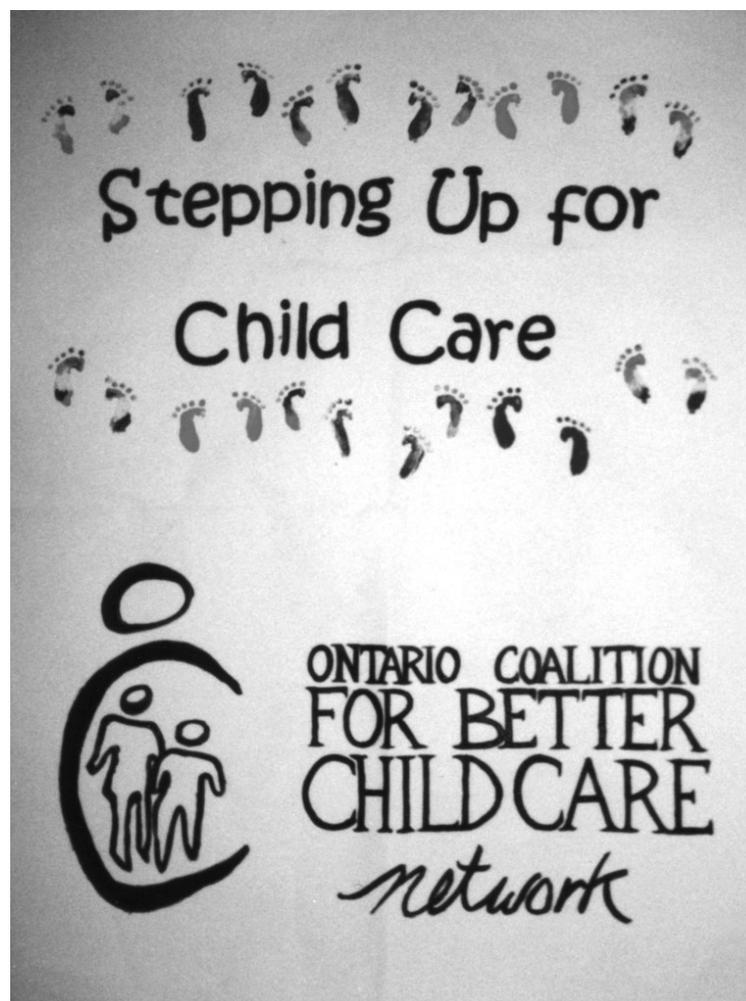
"The campaign was designed to pressure the provincial and federal governments to support regulated, non-profit child care services and family resource programs," said Katheryne Schulz, vice-president of CUPE 2484 and a

member of CUPE Ontario's Social Services Workers' Coordinating Committee.

The OCBC and CUPE were natural partners for the campaign. The OCBC lobbies for changes and improvements to child care policies that support high quality, publicly funded, affordable child care in Ontario. CUPE is the union that represents the most child care workers in Canada – almost 3,000 of them in Ontario – and it has a solid track record of fighting for universal, high quality child care.

The daylong workshops and evening forums held in the locations on the campaign tour revealed that communities were reeling from the effects of downloading of child care responsibilities, with many of the same issues surfacing again and again.*

At the same time, the sector is fighting back. The local action plans developed at the workshops are being followed up and inroads are being made. We're a long way off from victory. But we're also far from being defeated, as this report on the issues and action strategies discussed during the first phase of the campaign shows.**



* For an outline of the workshop and evening forum, see Appendix A.

** Throughout the report we quote various people who attended the workshops and forums. In some cases, names have not been used. Either identification was difficult to obtain, or people indicated they did not want to be identified if quoted.

The first workshop: negotiating and educating

The first Stepping Up for Child Care workshop was held in Pembroke by CUPE 2204. It subsequently became the basic model for the other workshops.

The union was negotiating for the workers at Wise Owl Day Care, which had been an approved corporation before downloading. This meant that city council was dealing with child care for the first time.

“We realized we needed to educate the local councillors,” said CUPE 2204 education officer Shellie Bird, who co-facilitated several other workshops on the campaign tour. “So we held a workshop and then made presentations to council. We did not focus on wages but on doing education so that we could lay the foundation for increased funding for Wise Owl for next year. We told council we were there to ask them to work with us to ensure the province comes through.”

But Wise Owl management was not willing to agree to a one-year contract, which was critical to the lobbying

strategy. After narrowly averting a strike, the union reached an agreement that included no concessions, but also no gains, said Bird.

“What we did learn through the strike averting campaign is that there is a very high level of support for staff by parents and the broader community. People were appalled at their [the staff’s] low salaries.”



A brief history of provincial downloading

In 1998, the Harris government made legislative amendments to download child care onto municipalities:

- Effective January 1, 2000, all of Ontario's 47 consolidated Municipal Services Managers were to deliver child care. Each municipality was instructed to develop a child care plan to be approved by the province.
- Budget items that were once fully funded by the province, such as wage enhancement grants, family resource centres, and supports for children with special needs, are now cost-shared, with the province putting in 80 per cent and municipalities 20 per cent.
- There are no provincial dollars for capital costs, which were also once fully funded by the province.

Essentially, municipalities have been ordered by the government to implement provincial child care policies with fewer provincial dollars. It has been estimated that municipal child care costs have doubled.



What's happened in some municipalities

The effects of the most recent policy and funding changes have already proved disastrous. Each separate municipality is making different decisions about the future of local child care services. Some are desperately trying to maintain their commitment to child care. But others are responding by reducing services. The municipal child care plan process and outcomes also vary, with the plans not always being developed in full consultation with the child care community and users of the service.

“We have really pushed our local elected representatives to take leadership where they wouldn't normally,” said Nancy Campbell, administrator of Dalhousie Parents' Day Care Centre, at the Ottawa workshop. “When we couldn't get the 80 per cent from the province, the municipality gave us 100 per cent. We've had a capital fund since 1997. Lots of communities don't have that and we need to always keep pushing on it.”

The city is spending \$3 million on child care above its cost-sharing agreement with the province, and Ottawa municipal councillor Elisabeth Arnold said at the evening forum that a two per cent increase in child care has been recommended for the upcoming municipal budget.

“But given the costs that centres are facing, it's no increase in terms of the number of spaces available,” she said. “We're not really moving the envelope forward at all. The most important thing to address is that provincial resources do exist, but despite that, there is no provincial commitment to licensed care and without this it is difficult for municipalities to meet commitments.”

In Toronto, for the third year in a row, and after heavy lobbying by the child care community, the city is putting money aside for 2,000 new spaces on the condition that the province share the cost. “We have put aside \$3 million and are waiting for the Harris government to do the right thing,” said municipal councillor Olivia Chow during the campaign tour.

Put up the money

In Sudbury, the latest public draft of the municipal child care plan puts more licensed child care, flexible care and a subsidy for recreational programs at the top of the priority list. But the local child care coalition had to pressure the municipal government to include a specific funding allocation for the licensed and flexible spaces.

In Peterborough, there is frustration at the slow pace of the child care plan. The municipal government wants to ensure the plan will be approved by the province because, one municipal official said, the city doesn't "want to go through hoops." Said one workshop participant: "These child care plans can hold up dollars. All the other sectors are taking up the money while these child care plans take time."

Municipal officials in Windsor told a planning session focus group of child care advocates and service providers to keep their expectations low. "We were told by the municipality, 'We're here to talk about the needs, but let's be very clear at the beginning that there is no new money,'" said Heather Boyer, the Canadian Auto Workers administrator for Child Care Services and an OCBCB board member.

In Lennox and Addington (in the Kingston area), the county has said it wants to expand home-based child care – but there are fears it will do so with subsidy dollars currently used for centre-based care.

Municipalities that want to increase child care services but feel cash-strapped are becoming more open to joining forces with the child care community to pressure the province for more child care funding. In Durham Region, "We keep asking the province to increase the number of subsidized spaces, and they're not there," said Larry

O'Connor, municipal councillor and chair of the Regional Health and Social Services Committee. "Downloading wasn't a surprise but the lack of money was. We have to work together to lobby the province."

Staving off cuts

"We had a targeted campaign with city councillors. We focused entirely on wards where city councillors who sit on the budget advisory committee reside. If you were [a councillor] in those wards, we didn't leave you alone. Of all of our 44 city councillors, only seven sit on the budget committee and only four had to vote for us to get it on the budget."

Jane Mercer, executive director, Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care, commenting on how child care was the only social service that did not get cut in the municipality's latest budget, thanks to a strong lobby by the child care community.



It's a national problem

The downloading domino

"I'm finding it astounding that there is nothing under the federal government."

"We're letting the feds off far too easy."

"The federal government doesn't want to be responsible for running anything anymore."

These were just some of the comments from the workshop exercise asking participants which level of government or program they would phone in order to get a long list of child care issues dealt with: child care centre boards, school boards, municipal governments, the province or the federal government?

The results of the exercise varied somewhat, but in general, the list under the federal government was – well – empty. That's because it's the federal government that started the downloading domino effect in the first place.

Here are the facts:

- In 1996, the federal government merged the transfers of funding to the provinces for health and post-secondary education (Established Programs Financing), and social welfare (Canada Assistance Plan) into one block fund (the Canada Health and Social Transfer).
- There were almost no strings attached on how the money was to be spent: the provinces were no longer required to make a matching contribution, nor were they required to spend any of the money they were getting on child care.
- At the same time, the federal government reduced the amount of the block funding for health, education and social welfare. Ontario received \$7-billion less when the cuts were in place.
- The National Children's Agenda produced federal funding of only \$2.2 billion over five years (about \$100 per child), with no guiding principles or timelines for creating a comprehensive national childhood development strategy. Furthermore, the provinces are not mandated to spend any of these



dollars on child care. In 2001, the first year of this funding, Ontario did not direct any additional funds to child care.

- As a result, the federal government for years now has made no policy or funding contribution to child care. Election promises of a national child care program by the Liberal government in 1993 have proved hollow.

This wholesale abdication of responsibility means underfunding and lack of services are the norm in almost every province, leaving children without access to high quality early childhood education and care. Child care remains a user-pay, market-based service, and meeting child care costs is thus a parental responsibility. The unacceptably low wages of child care providers continue to subsidize this critical service.

Over to you, municipalities, sort of

Provincial downloading should have made it easier for workshop participants to identify a whole series of issues as municipal responsibilities. And indeed in most workshops the list of provincial responsibilities for child care issues was small, and that under municipalities long. At the same time, many participants found it difficult to determine exactly where the responsibility really lies between local and provincial levels of government. Why? Because the province still wants to retain control of child care.

“Local government is now holding most of the responsibility,” said OCBC executive director Mary-Anne Bédard. “But do they have any of the power? No. If we had done this exercise two years ago, the list under the provincial government would have gone down the wall and across the floor. But even though the issues have moved over to local governments, the province is still holding all of the strings.”

“If you download to municipalities then you need to download policies, not micromanage at a policy level where you tie the municipalities’ hands,” said Ken Carruthers, a frustrated councillor from Scugog Township at Durham Region’s evening forum.

It’s not hard to see what the province’s agenda is. By retaining ultimate control, the province can continue to force municipalities to implement regressive and unwieldy policies. This in turn will put pressure on local governments to bit-by-bit abandon child care commitments. The result for child care: deregulation and privatization, the two cornerstones of the Harris government’s overall social and economic policies.



The pressures on programs

Municipal centres fight threats

“City day cares - 30 years of quality care.”

That’s the slogan being used by workers in Kingston’s two municipal child care centres who are fighting to keep these programs alive. The threat of the closures was a key issue at the Kingston workshop. It has also sparked controversy within the local child-care sector, with for-profit child care operators actively lobbying in favour of closing the centres.

Municipally-run child care programs are seen as a benchmark in child care, both for their high level of quality and the relatively superior wages, benefits and working conditions of child care staff. In 1997, 69 Ontario municipalities directly operated 197 child care programs. Now, municipalities are being encouraged by provincial downloading to get out of running child care centres in order to cut costs.

An equity issue

Directly operated municipal centres have historically delivered services to families who could not afford child care, thereby providing children in disadvantaged areas

with access to high quality care. These centres also often have high ratios of children with special needs. The two Kingston centres are located in higher-needs areas of the city and most parents receive child care subsidies. If the centres close, this equity component goes with them.

The workers have launched a public information campaign of newspaper, radio ads and a petition. Many of the parents have written letters to the editor supporting the two centres’ continuing operation.

The for-profit child care operators who want the centres to close charge that the municipality is in a conflict of interest, favouring its own child care programs over others. But studies show that equal government funding does not ensure equity. For example, staff salaries in for-profit centres are lower than those in non-profits even when they receive the same level of government funding, presumably because of the commercial centre’s profit motive.

Inadequate services

In almost every community visited by the campaign tour, there is not enough high quality, regulated child care to meet the diverse needs of families. Until more funding

becomes available to expand existing programs, open new ones, attract qualified staff to the occupation, and provide sufficient supplies, such as toys and other equipment, the situation of child care in Ontario can only get worse.

Across the board, there simply aren't enough child care services for children with special needs, or services to help children with behavioural problems. In Peterborough, as in other communities, there's a lack of infant spaces and school age child care. In communities like Windsor and Durham Region, where large numbers of shift workers reside, there's a desperate need for flexible care. There is a lack of rural child care in the communities that require it. Families from the First Nations community of Eagle Lake have to drive into Dryden for child care services. Francophone programs in places like Sudbury and Durham Region are inadequately funded and can't find or hold onto qualified child care teachers. There aren't enough child care centres located in schools.

In Niagara, parent Marney MacLean told the evening forum that there were 600 families in line ahead of her for a subsidized space.

"Our waiting list for enrolment is close to 100," said Barbara Buffett, a resource teacher with Dryden's Children's Centre. "And it's longer than before. Some

parents wait years and their kids grow past the age when they can use child care so they've never had access to our services."

Buffett noted that her program, the municipality and the local board of education were keen to see the addition of a child care centre in a new skills development centre being built in the community. "But at this point there's just no money," she said. "Unless there are capital dollars, nothing happens."

Susan Trott, a parent and chair of the Family Resource Committee for a newer Ottawa community told the evening forum that the fight for a family resource centre and child care program in her area has been going on for three years.

"There are over 600 kids in the neighborhood and just one public school," she said. "We don't have one licensed child care centre in our community. I know women who can't go to work because they can't find child care."

Downloading has also put many existing services at risk, and created tensions between child care programs and municipal governments. For example, there is a fear that the planned expansion of home child care in Lennox and Addington will come at the expense of subsidies currently going to Lennox and Addington Resources for Children (LARC). LARC delivers nine programs, mainly to rural families.

“...the Board relationship with the staff of the County has now degenerated to the point of ineffectiveness,” wrote LARC president Albert Mulligan, in a memo to staff and board members. “Because of this and other factors, we have an uncertain funding relationship with the County of Lennox and Addington, the delivery agent for child care and early years developmental services.”

Less support for children with special needs

Downloading has meant that the most vulnerable children – those with special needs – have even less chance than before to get the support they need.

What we learned

- On-site resource teachers for children with special needs are the exception in virtually the entire province. In Thunder Bay, the municipality is moving to a centralized model with no in-house resource teachers. Equity of resources is being cited as the reason, but the resource teachers in the centralized model will have more children to service. “We’re having to do more with less,” says Anita Broere, advisor at Thunder Bay’s W.J. Griffis Children’s Centre (Lakehead Association for Community Living). “They say that distribution of funding is more equitable, however, the big fear here is that they’re going to water down services.”
- “There’s not enough money for special needs services,” said Mary Thomson, co-ordinator of Overbrook Day Care in Ottawa. “And yet more and more children are being identified.” Even though the research shows that integrating children with special needs into child care programs is beneficial, there are no resources to support child care programs in this effort.
- Cuts to social assistance, schools and housing have sent many families into crisis and there are more children experiencing behavioural problems. But children with behavioural issues are not considered children with special needs.
- Children with special needs often require services from other professionals, who are in short supply or not available at all in some communities.
- In Niagara, deregulation of school age care has meant a lack of support for children with special needs because staff in recreation programs providing after-school care aren’t trained in this area.
- “You are discouraged from taking children with special needs because there is no money for specialized equipment,” said one Peterborough workshop participant. “You have to fight for funding every time. It’s a constant battle.”
- Several workshop participants in different communi-

ties said that subsidies are no longer viewed as a means of early intervention. The change can be detrimental to children with special needs, who may have different and special circumstances, but are now put on the same subsidy waiting list as others.

Looking for specialists in the north – and south

“We have medically fragile children but don’t have specialists who can treat them, and travel grants are short. There is not a lot of money for travel when you have to go to Southern Ontario for services. We lost our child psychiatrist here and when we talk about children’s needs and professionals to service those needs, Thunder Bay is fairly large but isolated, and going farther west the services get thinner and thinner until you reach the Manitoba border.”

Anita Broere, advisor, W.J. Griffis Children’s Centre, Lakehead Association for Community Living

“We have one child psychologist in Windsor and he’s in his 70s and travels here from Michigan.”

Heather Boyer, administrator, CAW child care services, Windsor

A heartbreaking wait

“There was a terminally ill child whose parents wanted him to experience peer interaction while he could still enjoy it. However, he had to wait two months to get into

a centre. When he got there he got wonderful care, but by that point was too sick to really benefit. I’m very angry. The space was available, but it was the waitlist for the subsidy. Subsidies are no longer seen as a support for early childhood education or for families, but only as a support for employment.

Merla McGill, Association for Community Living (Victoria County)

Tensions in schools

Provincial government changes that removed child care from the education funding formula and set school enrolment targets have had a far-reaching impact on child care programs in schools. From reduced caretaking services, new maintenance fees and huge rent increases, to the loss of space and threat of eviction because of school amalgamation, school-based child care programs are facing a real squeeze.

In Niagara, where 50 per cent of child care programs are in schools, some schools are closing. Child care program rents are being raised in other schools.

In Sudbury, four boards are considering closing schools because of the provincial funding formula.

In Durham Region, which is expanding and developing rapidly, workshop participants said the lack of a provincial



requirement and no funding to build a child care centre in every new school simply makes no sense. Usually, new schools are built in new housing developments. Because these communities are new, they have no established child care programs.

“Many parents want to go to a school that has a child care centre, but they can’t because they’re not living in the area [where that situation exists],” said Schoolhouse Playcare executive director, Denise Gilbert. “The lack of child care spaces in schools make that seamless day hard.”

In Toronto, as in many other communities, the lack of any policy on child care programs that operate in schools means there is inconsistency in the way that the education changes are being dealt with. Child care programs feel they are at the mercy of school principals.

In Ottawa, expanding a school-based program can be a very difficult proposition, filled with uncertainties. Said one participant: “We have no commitment to expansion and I don’t know that in September 2002 I’ll still have the space if I even get it in this round, and so then I might have to take expansion out. There’s always something to stop you from going ahead.”

Playground woes

Many child care centre playgrounds have not been able to pass the new and tighter CSA standards. This shouldn’t be a problem: just make the necessary changes and bring the playground up to code.

But the reality, the campaign tour heard, is that most programs have received no government money to do this,

and have been forced to fundraise or dismantle their equipment. In Ottawa, only two of the numerous playgrounds that did not pass code received money from the city for upgrading. Without passing a safety inspection, insurance carriers are unwilling to cover the liability, leaving boards of directors to assume it or close the play area.

There has also been difficulty getting inspections and inspection records. In Durham Region, this has resulted in a bizarre situation for one school-age program operating out of a school. Because the program can't get an inspection record, the children can't go into the playground after school, even though they've used it during the school day.

Others have been told by the municipality to do their own inspection. One workshop participant in the Durham Region workshop said, "The ministry requested documentation from the town that they regularly inspect the playgrounds. But they don't do it. Home child care providers [who use the playgrounds] do it."

In Niagara, workshop participants spoke of searching for playground funding anywhere they could find it, including from the corporate sector. Corporations seem to have been willing to fund equipment in exchange for signage on the playground. Look for the McDonald's Playscape – coming soon to a child care near you!

Other sectors within child care

While the majority of the people who participated in the workshops and forums were from centre-based child care programs, the campaign also included some representatives from regulated home child care and family resource centres.

In Ontario, regulated home child care is provided through licensed home child care agencies that enter into contracts with individual caregivers. The agency conducts quarterly in-home supervisory visits and is responsible for ensuring that home child care providers meet all legislated requirements. The campaign tour heard that regulated home child care is a choice for some parents because it meets their needs better than a centre-based program. For example, home child care programs may have more flexible hours for parents who work shifts. They are sometimes willing to take children earlier in the day or keep them later than child care centres, and occasionally provide part-time options. They are also sometimes more affordable than centre-based child care programs.

But several participants noted it isn't easy to recruit caregivers to work in the regulated sector because

there's not enough money to pay them adequately. Regulated home child care providers must meet provincial requirements on the number and ages of children they can look after, and health and safety standards, all of which are designed to ensure a level of quality care.

"But we're only able to pay a caregiver \$19 per day for toddlers and preschoolers," said Melanie Coyle, Lennox and Addington Resources for Children's home child care co-ordinator. She added that in the unlicensed home care sector, private providers will charge about \$25 a day, but don't have to comply with provincial regulations. This makes the quality of unlicensed home care unmonitored, but also means that the providers can, if they wish, take in more children than regulated providers. Many unlicensed providers also do not declare their incomes.

A similar wage discrepancy was noted in Ottawa, where a home-based infant space costs \$23 to \$25 in the licensed sector, and can cost \$38 in the informal sector.

Phyll Reid, from licensed home child care at the Children's Village in Ottawa said that centre-based and regulated home-based programs should work together to advocate

for quality care and better wages and working conditions.

“We must work to recognize expertise and strength in each sector,” she said.

Family resource centres, which often operate with volunteers and provide support for parents and home child care providers, have found that funding cuts are making it harder for them to serve the community.

Toys and equipment are just one example. In Peterborough, the number of parents and providers using family resource centres has increased dramatically. But the centres say their budgets have not. A budget that might once have been intended to cover toys and equipment for 40 children, now has to suffice for 70 children.

The pressures on families

Affordability

Parents who are able to pay the full fee for regulated child care are not the norm. That's because high quality child care is expensive. But it's also worth it. It's estimated that for every dollar invested in high quality child care, there's a \$2 benefit to children, parents and society. *

Now, child care subsidies - the major source of funding that helps parents afford high quality care while they work or study - have become harder and harder to access.

"Our students here have suffered the most," said Barbara Buffett, a resource teacher with Dryden's Children's Centre. "Now, a student has to take money out of OSAP and can't get a subsidy. They don't get help with child care, and they have to pay that money [the student loan] back."

The province has placed a cap on the total subsidy budget, making the waiting lists of eligible families in some communities very long. In Toronto, for example, there are 13,000 families on the waiting list.

In the County of Lennox and Addington, "our subsidy budget is maxed out for the year," said Melanie Coyle, who co-ordinates home child care for Lennox and Addington Resources for Children.

As if this situation weren't bad enough, the province recently added to the subsidy nightmare by tightening eligibility requirements.

"We need less restrictive provincial child care subsidy regulations," said the CAW's Heather Boyer of Windsor. "The regulations now prevent people from qualifying and are squeezing out families on the subsidy end. Full fee payers are having trouble paying and lots are being forced into unregulated care."

Tighter criteria

Two major eligibility changes will cause further hardships for families who want regulated, quality care for their children:

- Municipalities have been directed that they must now count RRSPs when assessing subsidy eligibility.

* The benefits & costs of good child care: The economic rationale for public investment in young children. Cleveland, G. & Krashinsky, M. Toronto: Childcare Resource & Research Unit, Centre for Urban & Community Studies, University of Toronto. 1998

- Funding for full-day child care is only provided for parents who study or work six hours or more per day. “In cases where parents are engaged in approved activities on a part-day basis, funding for full-day child care must not be provided,” says a Harris government memorandum of August 31, 2000.

What this means

The RRSP change means that many parents applying for subsidy will be forced to choose between regulated child care and some financial stability in their old age. The changes are hard for all families, but some are more severely affected than others.

“We have single parents who during their marriage time were able to put money in an RRSP and now they don’t qualify for subsidy,” said Anita Broere, advisor at the W.J. Griffis Children’s Centre (Lakehead Association for Community Living) in Thunder Bay.

Broere added that the RRSP requirement also puts an extra burden on families with children with special needs. Many of these families have more than one child with special needs. They also already have higher child care costs because of their children’s needs, and added financial and other responsibilities that will continue as the children grow up.

The Ottawa child care community has launched a court

challenge on the RRSP subsidy issue, naming the City of Ottawa and the provincial government as respondents. The judge hearing the initial arguments ordered an injunction against application of the RRSP criteria by the city until it could be determined which level of court would hear the case. (In early June, it was determined that the case would be heard in Divisional Court.)

Eligible hours change

The change in eligible hours is another looming disaster for families and children. Parents who are students, for example, simply do not have the 30 in-class hours needed to qualify under the new regulations.

“There is no community college that has more than 22 class hours a week, said Mary Knight, an Early Childhood Education teacher at Durham College. “You can’t have it by law, and the ministry is reducing some programs to 18 hours.”

There is also concern about how the new rules will affect the early childhood education lab programs that run the college child care centres. The programs are expected to be self-sufficient and student families make up a large part of the population they serve.

Moreover, restricting the hours of care provided to match only the actual hours parents work or study is unreasonable. Under current funding arrangements, centres can-

not afford to provide part-time spaces. The provincial memorandum says that “delivery agents are expected to maintain a flexible mix of subsidies and assistance for part- and full-day care, across all ranges, that reflects the range of social service needs.” But until the province develops a high quality, affordable and accessible child care system that is properly resourced, that’s just wishful thinking.

“Although we recognize that part-time care may be a need, we can’t administer matching the hours for more than one part-time subsidy,” said Cheryl DeGras, supervisor of the Pat Schulz Child Care Centre in Toronto, and the OCBCC’s president. “We can’t mold the existing system into accommodating this regulation change without additional dollars and staff to support it.”

A parent speaks out

“The province has made subsidy eligibility requirements harder and harder for families to meet. My three children had to stop investing in RESPs...My husband and I had to deplete the little we had in RRSPs because, although we may be caring for our youngest child [who has autism] for the rest of our lives, the luxury of planning for our older years does not belong to us: we’re receiving fee assistance. Although we are very thankful for our child care subsidy and what it has provided for Isaac, sitting in the subsidy office every year continues to be very disempowering for us. Universal child care cannot come a day too soon.”

Cathy Wright, parent, Toronto

Workfare: pushing children into unlicensed care

Some municipalities have indicated that they will only use unregulated care for the children of Ontario Works clients. The reason: the provincial allocation for child care for Ontario Works clients is way too low.

Ontario Works is the province's mandatory welfare-to-work program. Part of the program includes the Learning, Earning and Parenting program for teen parents.

"In Sudbury, one of our day care centres did something creative with LEAP dollars," said Lois Mahon, executive director of the Child Care Resources Centre in Sudbury. "It set up an on-site program at high schools. But we only get \$18 a day from LEAP and you can't do a quality program with that."

So the child care community encouraged two young mothers to come to the public meeting to discuss the region's child care plan.

"They came with their babies," said Mahon. "They were so eloquent. They said, 'why are our babies treated differently from the other babies?' And the commissioner said, 'You're right, we have to do something about it.'"

High quality child care good for children and parents

Quality child care is an essential support for all parents, and critical for those who are in the paid workforce.

The percentage of mothers with young children who work outside of the home has increased dramatically in the past 20 years. Workforce participation of mothers in two-parent families with children aged 3-5 alone has climbed to 68 per cent.*

Quality child care is necessary to enable mothers to work with peace of mind. One study found that 35 per cent of women workers reported finding balancing work and family so stressful that it constantly to frequently interfered with their concentration at work.**

One parent's story

"Words cannot express what quality child care has meant to me and my family. As a new Canadian it has given me a chance to improve my life, learn English, finish high school and study French. And I was also able to support my family while my husband was studying.

"[My children] were in a safe and trustworthy environment. Child care gave my children opportunities by providing a multicultural environment, stable care and teaching them self-reliance and co-operation with other children...I believe every child and family should have the right to benefit from quality child care as I do. I hope we can work together to make this system better and more accessible."

Asli Ahmed, parent, Ottawa, whose three children were in subsidized child care spaces.

* Women in Canada 2000. Cat. no. 89-503-XPE. Statistics Canada. Ottawa: 2000

** Are You Time Crunched? An Overview of Child Care Arrangements in Canada. The National Child Care Study. H. Goelman et al. Ottawa: 1993

Child care for \$5 a day

For many years, child care advocates have looked to European examples to show politicians it's possible to publicly fund high quality child care and make it a cornerstone of government social policy.

Now, with the advent of \$5-a-day child care in Québec, we have a much closer example. Québec's new family policy, which started to be implemented in 1997, is the most developed in Canada. Here are the key elements of the policy:

- Directly funded child care programs, including universal, \$5-a-day child care for preschool children.
- Half-time kindergarten for children 4 years of age, supplemented by educational child care services for the rest of the day; and full-time kindergarten for children 5 years of age.
- Before- and after-school care for all children aged 5 to 12 for \$5 a day.
- The creation of a network of child care centres, with 200,000 spaces available and 12,000 new jobs by 2005-2006.

- A commitment to look at ways to provide quality services for parents who work irregular hours. (At the end of August, 2000 the government announced 10 pilot projects for 24-hour-a-day child care services.)
- A monthly family allowance based on the number of children and family income.

It was common for those who attended the evening forums to ask: "Why can't we have \$5-a-day child care?"

The answer is, we can. All it takes is political will. Other provinces have started to make a stronger commitment to funding high quality child care. In Manitoba, the NDP government has announced it is committed to developing a universal child care program. And in June, 2000, the former NDP government in British Columbia announced that beginning January, 2001, parents would have access to licensed, before- and after-school care for \$7 a day for children from Grade One up to age 12. (The new Liberal government scrapped this commitment.)

The pressures on child care staff

Low wages. Inadequate benefits. High turnover rates. The expectation to be caregivers, parents, counsellors and more. Poor working conditions and a lack of proper resources to do the job. Given these conditions, would you choose child care as an occupation? Only 44 per cent of those who already work in child care say yes, they would, if they had to do it all over again – a drop from the 63 per cent who responded positively in 1991.

According to the same study on caregiver wages and working conditions*, one in five staff across Canada (22 per cent) leave their centre every year. In some provinces, turnover is even higher.

Low wages top the list of reasons child care workers leave. Child care teachers earn an average wage of \$22,717 a year across Canada. (Wages are lowest in the commercial, for-profit sector.) That's just slightly more than the average \$21,038 earned by parking lot attendants. Yet 82 per cent of centre staff have at least one year of post-secondary specialized education, while 75 per cent have a two-year college credential or university degree.

- More than a third of staff who quit leave child care altogether. They are usually the better trained and more experienced child care teachers.
- Finding qualified staff is a problem, say 51 per cent of directors. And 35 per cent say qualified staff are difficult to hold onto.

Staff shortages

In every community visited by the campaign tour, participants said that it was increasingly hard to attract and keep qualified staff. There is also a dearth of supply staff. "If they're on your list they're on mine too," was a commonly expressed sentiment.

- In Sudbury, the tour heard that you can make \$2 an hour more pumping gas than being a child care worker.
- In Durham, summer students hired at child care centres have left to work at General Motors, where they can earn \$22 an hour.

* You Bet I Care! Study 1 - A Canada-wide Study on Wages, Working Conditions, and Practices in Child Care. G. Doherty, D. S. Lero, H. Goelman, J. Tougas & A. LaGrange. The Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being at the University of Guelph. May, 2000

- In Ottawa, it was noted that supply staff could make more money as waitresses, or working on high tech assembly lines that pay \$20 an hour.

But pay and benefits aren't the only issues for child care workers. As the stresses of balancing work and family life have increased, so have the expectations and stresses on child care workers.

"Those in the field are saying the caliber of ECE's is going down," said Mary Knight, an Early Childhood Education teacher at Durham College. "But there is no way that in two years we can teach all that."

Because of all the negative factors affecting the job, few young women today view child care as a career. Many of those who enter the occupation use it as a stepping stone to another higher-paying job, usually teaching.

Child care is still viewed by many as a low-skilled occupation. The provision of early childhood education to children is not generally recognized as part of what child care providers do.

"What happens is the guidance teacher says, 'This girl doesn't know what she wants to do. She likes children, so let's send her into child care,'" said Knight. "It's part of the idea that everyone can be a child care worker."

It's also what happens in a sector that is subjected to economic and job-related discrimination. Those who

work in child care are overwhelmingly female and provide a service that was traditionally unpaid women's work. The caring nature of the job is also exploited: like mothers with their own families, child care workers are expected to put the needs of the families they provide services to ahead of their own.

Wage Grants

In most communities the campaign tour visited, wage levels were high on the list of frustrations. In several communities, the issue of the Wage Subsidy Grant created lively discussion, some disagreements, and showed how tensions can arise in the sector if the funding situation that currently exists isn't challenged.

The Wage Subsidy Grant combines two previous grants: the Direct Operating Grant (providing an average \$5,000 per non-profit staff member per year and \$2,500 for those in commercial programs) and the Wage/Provider Enhancement Grant (providing between \$1,500 and \$2,000 per staff, depending on the service).

Wage grants make up about 20 per cent of a child care program's budget and provide programs with their only source of stable funding. They are a way for programs to increase staff pay without increasing parent fees.

Now, the provincial government has directed municipalities to equalize wage grants in the community by reallo-

cating and renegotiating them, leading to a number of possibilities.

- The same pot of money could be used to provide grants to new staff in non-profit centres who don't currently receive grants. This means staff who have been receiving the full subsidy will see their wages lowered.
- Staff in the for-profit sector, traditionally excluded from the bulk of the grant, could now be included, resulting in major wage cuts for workers in non-profit centres.
- Municipalities could convert wage grants to operating grants, and leave the spending decisions up to the management of each program.

"Durham Region is still working on how to equalize wage grants," said Denise Gilbert, executive director of Schoolhouse Playcare. "I think it's an impossible task [without additional funding]."

Some workshop participants felt that the wage subsidy creates too many disparities between programs. They maintained that the subsidy should be reallocated so that all staff receive them, whether they work in non-profit or commercial centres.

But many felt public dollars should not be used to subsidize private businesses that are unaccountable to taxpayers. Moreover, they did not feel that it was fair to ask child

care staff to subsidize the wages of others because it would only lead to a downward spiral of lower wages for everyone.

The responsibility for raising the low wages of those working in child care should be the government's and we should advocate to increase wage grants, said the OCBC's Mary-Anne Bédard. "If we go ahead and say to others, 'here, take some of mine,' we'll never keep the benchmark. If we take care of those wage inequities by subsidizing each others' wages, then we let the government off the hook."

Getting the municipality on side

"We said to [the municipality], 'You also have to go to bat for us with wage subsidies.' I was able to call the OCBC and include data on what was happening elsewhere from the OCBC. They also agreed to put pay equity into the [child care] plan and that lobbying would happen. So we are going to go forward and work together in partnership."

Lois Mahon, executive director of the Child Care Resources Centre in Sudbury, on advocacy efforts to win municipal support for better child care wages

The effects of low wages

"Salaries are low and pay raises non-existent. Salaries don't reflect increased responsibilities and result in



large staff turnover. Low salaries have had an impact on labour/management relations and cause increased tensions in the centres. In non-union centres, staff just leave. In unionized centres, they go on strike.”

Janet Teibo, President, CUPE 2484, Toronto

\$9.50 an hour is not enough

“We had no fair treatment, no respect for our skills, no wage equality and no democracy in our workplace,” said Yullie Fitz-Charles, shop steward of CUPE 2484. Fitz-Charles and the 22 other workers at Progress Day Care Centre in Scarborough went on strike for six weeks on May 4.

While the average provincial child care wage is \$13.50 an hour, the workers at Progress were earning an average \$9.50 at the beginning of the strike. They won increases of two, three and three per cent.

There were also major issues of democracy in this dispute. CUPE 2484 members are now working to get parents onto the centre’s board of directors and make it a true non-profit organization.

Pay Equity

When Mike Harris was elected in 1995, his government immediately scrapped the pay equity legislation brought in by the NDP, which gave child care programs one per

cent of their previous year’s payroll for pay equity adjustments. But when the Ontario Divisional court ruled in favour of a Charter challenge brought forward by the Service Employees International Union, the government paid up. Then, it refused to fund any more pay equity adjustments beyond December 31, 1998, leaving child care programs with the legal obligation to make the pay equity increases.

“This is becoming a big issue in Ottawa,” Kathy Yach, provincial president of the Association of Early Childhood Educators, told the Ottawa workshop. “If you create a new position now it has to be paid at the top rate and there’s no top-up if you have a pay equity plan. You must pay the person the pay equity rate immediately, but there’s no top-up.”

That means many programs cannot expand because they cannot afford the cost of creating a new position.

Many centres feel that they are in a no-win situation. If they make the pay equity adjustments, they’ve calculated that they’ll be out of business by 2003. If they don’t, they accrue an unfunded liability. Insurance companies have already warned some programs they will soon reach the point where they will not have enough assets to cover this liability. When that happens, the companies will refuse to offer volunteer board members, officers and directors liability insurance, leaving directors personally liable.

Stepping up for pay equity

The Canadian Union of Public Employees – along with the Service Employees International Union, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, the Ontario Nurses Association and the United Steelworkers of America – is preparing another Charter challenge on the Harris government’s refusal to fund pay equity. The unions say the government is guilty of discrimination and violating Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

What can you do?

- Sound the alarm of what could happen to child care programs if the government continues to refuse to fund pay equity.
- Encourage your municipality and your local parents’ federation or group to apply for intervenor status in the Charter challenge.
- Get your municipality on side to lobby the province to restore funding for pay equity.

“We’re not gaining, we’re just struggling to hold on in the face of the knowledge that pay equity could wipe out any one of our centres in the next few years.”

Jackie Dwyer, administrator, Sunflower Co-operative Day Nursery, Ottawa

Growing older and poorer

“Our staff call it “Freedom 85.”

Sandra Robinson, Trent Child Care, Peterborough

Unless you are a child care provider who works in a municipally operated centre, chances are you don’t have a pension plan. At best, your employer might put money aside in an RRSP, but even this is not the norm. Only 27 per cent of all child care centres in Canada provide some form of RRSP or pension plan. The percentage is higher in unionized centres (53 per cent) as opposed to those without a union (23 per cent).*

* Ibid. Differences between unionized and non-unionized staff reflect differences between provinces and auspices as well as unionization status.

One solution for unionized child care workers is CUPE's recent national Multi-Sector Pension Plan for members who do not have pensions or have inferior plans. Participation in the multi-sector plan has to be negotiated into the collective agreement. In addition, the level of contribution by both parties must be included in the collective agreement.

Ottawa's CUPE child care local was one of the first CUPE locals to vote to join the plan. "This will give members more security after they retire," said Julie Henry, a member of CUPE 2204 and CUPE Ontario's Social Services Workers' Coordinating Committee. "It also means they'll probably stay in the field longer, and that will have a positive impact on child care."

The pension solution for non-unionized workplaces? There's no quick fix, but a good first step might be placing a call to a union organizer.

Advocacy

When it comes to advocating for high quality child care, the best thing is to “find the thing that makes you feel comfortable and do that,” said OCBCCC public education coordinator Susan Sperling. “If that’s talking to people, then do that. If it’s writing a letter to the editor, do that.”

Advocacy is part of the job of parents, child care workers and supervisors, early childhood education students and anyone else concerned with the future of our children and our society. But the campaign tour heard that many people are reluctant to step forward for a number of reasons, ranging from burnout and the fear of not knowing enough, to the portrayal of advocacy by the right-wing and the media as a criminal activity instead of a civic duty.

There are many ways to advocate. Lobbying, making deputations to council, circulating petitions, educating parents about child care issues, demonstrations, letter-writing, strikes, legal actions like the Charter challenge on the pay equity issue are just a few.

The campaign tour workshop included an afternoon session on building the advocacy skills of letter writing and face-to-face lobbying, as well as developing local action plans for follow-up. Included in the workshop kit

was a handy advocacy how-to guide produced by the OCBCCC, *Stepping Up for Child Care: Advocacy Made Easy*. A “must-have” for anyone interested in advocacy, the guide provides suggestions and step-by-step guidelines on how to contact government members, meet with politicians, use the media, organize letter and phone lobbies, circulate petitions and use the Internet to advocate.

Letters to the editor

In Durham, the workshop group writing letters to the editor worked from a Durham Region newsletter article entitled, ‘Durham’s “greatest” budget ever: Finance Minister said local MPPs fought for high-growth community’. The three letters from the group emphasized that no money had been allocated for child care. One of the letters asked: “with all these people who will now be offered jobs in Durham Region, where will children get child care?”

Another said that regional growth would bring with it more employed parents who would need child care for their children. Yet only 6 per cent of the total need for child care in the region was being met by regulated programs.

Said the third letter: “Since child care has not been considered in your ‘greatest budget ever’, why not invest the \$15 billion [from tax cuts] in our children?”

In all communities, workshop participants were encouraged to send in their letters to the editor. When they did, more often than not, they were published the following day.

Lobbying the politicians

The advent of downloading means that child care staff, parents and advocates must persuade local governments to put local dollars into children’s services. This is especially challenging since local governments are contending with provincial downloading in other areas, and operating in a perceived right-wing climate that favours tax cuts over investments in public services. It also means convincing local politicians to put continued pressure on the province to adequately fund child care.

“If we get municipal government on side to say ‘no’ to the province, we can be stronger,” said OCBCBCC executive director Mary-Anne Bédard. “If the municipality lies down and says, ‘yes, we’ll make the cuts,’ then we’ve lost the first round.”

Local, provincial and federal politicians were invited to every evening forum on the campaign tour. NDP children’s critic Shelley Martel and Liberal children’s critic Leona Dombrowsky joined the forum in almost every community.

They were introduced from the floor and invited to say a few words about their party’s position on child care.

In some places, the turnout of politicians was fairly high, with those who were unable to attend sending representatives. In others, the response was not as good, and as part of their advocacy efforts, participants were encouraged to call these politicians up the next day and ask why they had not attended.

In many cases, the campaign tour heard, local politicians are not informed or interested in child care, and need a lot of education on the issue. Furthermore, most municipal councils are male-dominated. Dealing with child care is a brand new experience for many councillors, particularly those from smaller communities.

“Our councillors were fiddling with pens when child care came up, but when curbs came up they picked up and must have asked 50 questions,” said Teresa Dumas, of Kawartha Child Care Services.

An invitation to learn

How do you educate politicians about the importance of child care? Here’s one suggestion: invite the politicians to visit your child care program, tell them to come in jeans, then put them to work. That’s what they did in Ottawa when they invited local MPP Richard Patton to the Centretown Parents Daycare. “We developed learning

goals for him and he had to lead a circle knowing he was meeting the learning goals in the activity,” said Shellie Bird, education officer for CUPE 2204. “He got a better appreciation of what ECE is and the importance of the work we do.”

The idea has been taken up in Windsor, where local advocacy meetings are in the works to discuss organizing child care visits by all of the city councillors.

Other things your municipal councillor can do:

- Be your source of information about when strategic votes will be held at council and when the best opportunities are to make presentations to council.
- Vote in favour of maintaining and expanding regulated child care services.
- Talk to other councillors to try to convince them to support high quality child care.

Making the politicians care

Former Tory MPP Al Leach was invited to visit a child care centre in his central Toronto riding, but wouldn't accept. So, at a public meeting he attended, child care advocates challenged him about this and embarrassed him into making a commitment to go. But he still didn't show up. Finally, the group waited until his constituency day and took the children to his office and had snack and circle right there, with the media watching.

Campaigning for high quality child care

In Sudbury, the child care community has been successful in lobbying for changes to a draft of the Child Care Services Strategic Plan.

The community was armed with the action strategy it developed during the campaign tour workshop and already had an established record of lobbying local government on child care issues.

“We first got going when the NDP went out of power,” said Lois Mahon, executive director of Sudbury's Child Care Resources Centre. “The NDP had provided money to start five child care centres through the Jobs Ontario strategy and when Harris came in the government said, ‘that money is gone.’ The City said, ‘We're not going to give the 20 per cent to fund them,’ and we became active and filled the city council meeting with parents, children and child care workers, and were successful in getting the 20 per cent.”

When the campaign tour hit Sudbury, the community was in the middle of the child care plan process. “So when the coalition came we focussed on the strategic child care plan,” she said.

Initially, the municipality had said the plan would go through several drafts, then be presented at a public meeting before going to council for approval.

“But that changed, and we were told that there would be one plan going to the city, no public meeting, and ‘here are the highlights, will you endorse it?’” Municipal officials said they could not release the plan before council had a chance to see it.

“Our biggest issue was that we couldn’t see the plan. So, using the skills we learned in the workshop, we got as many parents as we could to contact city councillors.” The parents were given an issue sheet and a brief outline of what they should demand: that council members defer approval of the plan until there had been an opportunity for public input at a meeting.

The lobby worked. At the council meeting, eight councillors said they’d had faxes, phone calls or e-mails from their constituents. The councillors demanded to know why the public had not seen the report.

The plan was deferred and released to the public, and a subsequent community meeting held. Prior to the meeting, the child care community wrote its own report on the child care plan, identifying seven issues of concern, and including a one-page synthesis of these issues.

“The synthesis was taken by officials and made the basis of the public meeting,” said Mahon. “This was perfect because it focussed on our issues. We went through it point by point. . . They listened to what we had to say and said, ‘Okay we’ll adjust this,’ on almost every point.”

Other activities

The action plans that came out of the campaign tour workshops varied in scope and focus, depending on the “hot” child care issues in the community and whether there already was an advocacy infrastructure in place. Some things have already started to happen. Here are just a few examples of plans and actions:

- In Peterborough, the local action group collected 275 signatures on the petition enclosed in the campaign workshop kit. The person who collected the most signatures received a homemade strawberry-rhubarb pie. The committee also sent photos of children to Community and Social Services Minister John Baird to show him the real faces of the many children who use and need child care in the community.
- In Windsor, follow-up letters have been sent to the mayor and each councillor about the workshop, and to the commissioner of social services and the mayor about the local child care community’s response to the provincial budget. Several other initiatives have been taken, including articles in union newsletters to highlight the issues in the campaign, and the participation of child care advocates on a radio phone-in show to talk about a recent U.S. study on child care and the need for better government funding.
- In Durham Region, a three-step process has been set

up to develop an action plan to raise parent awareness of how cuts are affecting their child's program. One workshop participant volunteered to do overall co-ordination of the effort.

- In Ottawa, the group developed a plan to enlist parents and child care staff to lobby councillors to push for increased child care dollars. The plan includes holding a media event with sympathetic councillors.
- In Dryden, the child care advocates representing the nine communities at the workshop decided their first task would be to go back to their communities to hold information sessions for parents. They wanted to make parents aware of the effects of downloading on services. The aim is to mobilize the parents to lobby councillors, MPPs and federal politicians.

The next steps

What's next in the campaign? CUPE and the OCBCC will continue to work together to keep up the fight against the effects of provincial downloading on child care. There's already been a considerable amount of planning on how to build on the first phase of the Stepping Up for Child Care Campaign.

The OCBCC is seeking funding for a number of follow-up activities:

- The organization of a two-day seminar expanding on the issues raised in the Stepping Up for Child Care workshops.
- Bringing together local action group members from different communities to network and develop strategies.
- Workshops to build on the skills developed at the campaign tour workshops.
- A fall forum to plan an intensive provincial lobby effort for Spring 2002.
- Monitoring early childhood services across Ontario and providing the information to local networks.
- Working to make child care a priority issue in the next election.

In addition, as an immediate step, CUPE and the OCBCC encouraged child care workers, local child care committees, child care associations, and child care provider networks in Ontario to get their municipalities to officially designate October 24 as "Child Care Worker Appreciation Day." The organizations made kits available which included a sample letter to city councillors, a media release and a list of different events and actions to make "Child Care Worker Appreciation Day" a visible community event.

As part of its ongoing efforts to defend high quality child care, CUPE also plans to build resistance among its members to counter the growing threat to municipal child care delivery.

There's no question that the battle for high quality, affordable and accessible child care in Ontario is far from being won. But response to the Stepping Up for Child Care campaign tour has shown that although those who are involved in child care have been struggling for years, they're not even thinking of giving up the fight. The campaign received an overwhelmingly positive response in the communities it visited. The challenge now is to build on that momentum and deliver a strong, grass-roots based message to governments that they have a responsibility to "step up" for the province's children, who are our future workers, parents and voters.



Appendix A: Anatomy of the Stepping Up for Child Care campaign tour

Each tour stop included a full-day, participatory workshop directed primarily at child care supervisors, staff and board members, and an evening public forum for parents, politicians, the media and the public. The tour received media coverage in every location it visited. Here is an outline of the day's events.

The workshop

Morning session: local child care issues

1. Small group brainstorming session on frustrating issues, which participants then write down on laminated coloured cards.
2. Back in the larger group, coloured cards are posted on the wall and each issue is discussed.
3. "Making the links" exercise. Participants identify which level of government (or program) is responsible for each issue. Issues are categorized on the wall, producing a visual and effective way of identifying the key issues in each location.

Afternoon session: advocacy

1. General discussion: what is advocacy, what stops us from doing advocacy
2. Group exercises. First group writes a letter to the editor advocating for high quality child care and basing its letter on a newspaper article. Second group prepares for a role-play meeting with a politician. Third group takes an issue from the morning session and creates an action plan.
3. Small group exercises are taken up in the larger group.
4. At the end of the day, several participants commit to following up as part of a local action group, which will stay in contact with the OCBC.

The evening forum

1. A panel discussion with participation by a municipal politician and a local parent.
2. Viewing and discussion of video on Québec's \$5-a-day child care program.

Appendix B

Workshop facilitators

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Mary-Anne Bédard | Executive Director, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care |
| Shellie Bird | CUPE 2204 Education Officer |
| Julie Henry, | member, CUPE 2204; child care representative, CUPE Ontario Social Services Workers' Coordinating Committee; member, CUPE National Child Care Working Group |
| Katheryne Schulz | Vice-President, CUPE 2484; member, CUPE Ontario Social Services Workers' Coordinating Committee. |
| Susan Sperling | Public Education Coordinator, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care |

Local Organizers

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Niagara: | Shannon McNevin , Niagara Nursery School |
| Kingston: | Sina Chiapetta , Depot Pre-School, Melanie Coyle , Lexington and Addington Resources for Children |
| Windsor: | Heather Boyer , CAW Child Care Services |
| Peterborough: | Sandra Robinson , Trent Child Care Centre |
| Sudbury: | Chantal Dalcourt and Lois Mahon , Child Care Resources |
| Ottawa: | Shellie Bird and Rachel Besharah , CUPE 2204 |

Dryden: **Barbara Buffett**, Dryden Children’s Resource Centre

Thunder Bay: **Kim Gunnell**, Footsteps Family Centre

Toronto: **Jane Mercer**, Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care
Deirdre Munroe, Central Eglinton Children’s Centre
Ann Hepditch, Learning Enrichment Foundation
Sinéad Rafferty, ECE student, George Brown College

Durham: **Ron Dancey**, Durham Child Poverty Task Force
Denise Gilbert, Schoolhouse Playcare
Denise Cashley, Resources for Exceptional Children
Mary Knight, Durham College Early Childhood Education
Karen Kozlenko, CUPE 1764
Drummond White, Ontario Association of Social Workers–Durham Branch
Kathy Fowlie, CAW Women’s Committee
Martine Fournier, Labour Community Services, Oshawa–Whitby–Clarington United Way

Resources

Childcare Resource and Research Unit (2000) Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada: Provinces and Territories, 1998. Toronto: University of Toronto, Centre for Urban and Community Studies, Childcare Resource and Research Unit

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Web sites

Canadian Union of Public Employees:
cupe.ca

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care:
childcareontario.org

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