

Quality Care, Quality Choices

A CPJ Backgrounder on Childcare

by Mariel Angus

CITIZENS *for* PUBLIC JUSTICE





CITIZENS *for* PUBLIC JUSTICE

Our Vision

- CPJ is committed to seek human flourishing and the integrity of creation as our faithful response to God’s call for love, justice and stewardship.
- We envision a world in which individuals, communities, societal institutions and governments all contribute to and benefit from the common good.

Our Mission

- CPJ’s mission is to promote *public justice* in Canada by shaping key public policy debates through research and analysis, publishing and public dialogue. CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society, and governments to support policies and practices which reflect God’s call for love, justice and stewardship.

Public Justice

- Public Justice is the *political* dimension of loving one’s neighbour, caring for creation and achieving the common good, and is particularly the responsibility of government and citizens.

CPJ addresses a range of public justice issues, from eliminating poverty to creating a climate of welcome for newcomers to fostering hopeful citizenship. CPJ’s professional staff actively engage in a number of activities to realize CPJ’s mission and keep public justice front and centre in policy debates.

Our members, who come from a wide variety of faith communities, are committed to public justice and its contributions to public dialogue. They participate in CPJ’s work through campaigns, dialogue and financial support. CPJ’s 13-member board of directors includes representation from across Canada and meets regularly three times per year.

The CJL Foundation
operating as CPJ.

Charitable registration
89438 3512 RR0001

309 Cooper Street
Suite 501
Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 0G5

T 613-232-0275
F 613-232-1275
cpj@cpj.ca
www.cpj.ca

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE	2
POLICY ANALYSIS	2
Current Reality: The Need for Childcare	2
Policy Context	5
Policies Being Advocated	9
Wider Context	12
CORE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES	16
CPJ'S WORK ON CHILDCARE	18
PUBLIC JUSTICE FACTORS	20
QUESTIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD	21

Quality Care, Quality Choices: A CPJ Backgrounder on Childcare

By Mariel Angus

Executive Summary

Over the last three decades, changing gender norms for women, stagnating wages, and an increasing cost of living has led to a dramatic rise in the participation of women with young children in the Canadian labour force. This increase has been closely followed by a rise in demand for non-parental childcare for children under the age of six while their parents engage in formal employment and other activities.

Early childhood development experts have found that quality care outside the home, if combined with education, (termed *Early Childhood Education and Care*, or ECEC) can contribute to a child's well-being and development. However, care for children that is lacking in quality or a stimulating environment can fail to capture the potential of young children to thrive and in some cases can be detrimental to their well-being.

Currently, childcare in Canada consists of a diverse patchwork of formal and informal care arrangements and is characterized by high parent fees, low accessibility, high demand, little standardization and uneven levels of quality. The only exception to this is Quebec, which introduced an affordable, publicly-funded childcare program in 1998. Outside of Quebec, however, only 24 percent of children under the age of six have access to a licensed childcare spot.

A lack of accessible, affordable, quality childcare programs can have a detrimental impact upon children and their parents. It can limit parents' options in balancing work and family responsibilities, and can result in young children being placed in care that is not of high quality. As mothers continue to be primary caregivers for children, a lack of childcare disproportionately impacts women. The high cost of care can pose a significant financial burden for many families, contributing to income insecurity and poverty.

Despite high demand for childcare services, Canada's investment in childcare programs remains one of the lowest in the industrialized world. Countries that have implemented national childcare programs have found that it can help promote child development, reduce poverty, strengthen women's equality and stimulate the economy. Polls reveal that many Canadians view a lack of childcare as a very serious issue which government has a responsibility in addressing. However, a lack of government investment can in part be attributed to ambivalent attitudes in Canadian society regarding the roles of women in society and the role of government in helping provide childcare.

In past decades, Citizens for Public Justice has examined the issue of childcare and advocated for federal government investment in childcare and other programs that help enable families with young children to thrive. CPJ believes that government can promote public justice by creating policies that help ensure that parents have sufficient resources and services to raise their children in dignity and well-being, and that provide children with opportunities that encourage their development. This paper concludes with a series of questions to consider when moving forward on the need for investment in childcare.

Introduction: Early Childhood Education and Care

In past decades, childcare outside the home has been understood as “daycare” – an institutionalized service in which to place children while their parents worked. However, as scientific understanding of early childhood development has grown in recent years, it has been found that the experience of quality care combined with education – known as *Early Childhood Education and Care* (ECEC) – can provide multiple benefits for young children compared to other types of non-parental care. Early childhood education is defined as “the growth of a child that takes place from the moment of conception until the child is six years old. It is commonly understood to fall into five domains: physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and communication skills and general knowledge.¹ In order for children to thrive, this education must be experienced within the context of loving, stable and secure relationships with family and caregivers.

While there are many benefits to childcare for children ages three to five years, research has found these benefits to be limited for very young children. To promote child development, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) recommends that childcare programs should be accompanied by government policies that provide extended parental leave and income support for parents to care for their very young children at home.

As primary caregivers for their children, parents have the responsibility to make decisions for their children regarding the care they receive. Policies regarding childcare should be created with the intention of broadening choices for parents and providing opportunities for children. If children are entrusted to non-parental care, it should be of the highest quality, contribute to their well-being, and provide them with a caring and stimulating environment that encourages their growth and development.

When the term “childcare” is used in this policy paper, it is intended to be understood as Early Childhood Education and Care (and is also on occasion referred to as Early Learning and Child Care). When the term “daycare” is used, it is intended to mean non-parental care outside the home that provides a caring environment for children, but is not necessarily educational.

1. Policy Analysis

Current Reality: The Need for Childcare

The last two decades have seen a dramatic rise in the participation of women with young children in the labour force in Canada. In 2004, approximately 70 percent of mothers whose youngest child was between the ages of three to five were engaged in the paid employment, up from 37 percent in 1976.² A greater number of women are postponing childbearing in order to gain post-secondary education and establish careers, and are returning to the workforce sooner after having children.

This shift has been due in large part to changing societal norms regarding female gender roles. Historically, women in Canadian society have largely been defined by their domestic role as mother and homemaker. However, over the last half-century, social values and attitudes have changed significantly with regards to the types of activities that are considered socially acceptable for women to engage in. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of women gaining post-secondary education and

engaging in formal employment. This has significantly strengthened the financial independence and personal autonomy of women in comparison to past decades. Today, women in Canada enjoy much greater independence, freedom of self-expression and choice in their personal, professional and social lives than they have in previous generations. Women's participation in the formal labour market is considered by many to be a significant marker of progress towards the realization of gender equality.

However, women have not only joined the workforce for reasons of independence and personal development – for most, it has also become a financial necessity. Over the past four decades, declining levels of income in comparison to the cost of living has also placed increasing pressure on women with families to engage in paid employment. In the 1950s, a middle-class, dual-parent family in Canada was predominantly supported by one income-earner. However, despite significant economic growth over the past generation, the wages of the middle and lower classes have stagnated or declined when adjusted for inflation. The only segment of the Canadian population that have seen their wages rise are those in the highest income bracket. A decline in the social welfare policies of the 1950s and 1960s and the rise of neo-liberal economic policies since the 1980s has had a significant impact on this growing inequality.³ Inequality, combined with a rising cost of living, is a significant reason for the greater participation of women in the workforce.

Today, the majority of middle-class families must rely on two incomes instead of one in order to sustain their standard of living. They must also often work longer hours than in previous decades in order to do so.⁴ This increase in formally employed mothers with young children has been closely followed by a rise in demand for non-parental childcare. While the majority of childcare is still provided by parents within the home, children under the age of six are spending increasing amounts of time in non-parental care. According to Statistics Canada, in 2002-2003, a majority of Canadian children age six months to five years received some care from someone other than their parents.⁵ This trend has similarly occurred in a majority of other industrialized nations over the last two decades.⁶

Current Childcare Arrangements

Canada begins universal public funding for children beginning at the age of five or six with kindergarten, with the exception of Ontario and Quebec, where most four-year old children attend Junior Kindergarten (known as "*prématernelle*" in Quebec). Provincial/territorial governments are responsible for the provision of both childcare services and kindergarten. In all provinces and territories, policies and programs regarding the establishment, funding and staffing of childcare are separate from kindergarten and other forms of education for young children.⁷

Currently, childcare in Canada for children younger than five years of age consists of a diverse patchwork of formal and informal care arrangements. Formal arrangements include licensed care in either childcare centres or within a home with a licensed childcare provider. The majority of licensed childcare spaces in Canada are in regular childcare centres, and the majority of these (79% as of 2003) are non-profit. In 2003, 82% of all licensed day-care spots were in regular childcare centres, while 18% were licensed spots in a family home.⁸ Licensing is a responsibility of each provincial or territorial government, and regulations vary across the country. Requirements of licensing include health, safety and staff training standards that include specifications such as physical space, child-staff ratios and maximum numbers of children allowed.⁹ Regulated childcare spaces in both homes and centres are subject to random inspections by provincial inspectors, and may be shut down if they do not meet required standards.

Informal care – either within the child’s home or outside the home – is also increasingly common. Informal childcare may be provided by many different members of a family’s social circle and community, including neighbours, relatives, friends and local caregivers.

Studies on types of childcare in Canada reveal the diversity of arrangements that exist. In 2002-2003, about 28 percent of children who received non-parental care were enrolled in a childcare centre as their main care arrangement. 30 percent were cared for by a relative either inside or outside the child's home, 30 percent were cared for outside the home by a non-relative, and the remaining were cared for through other arrangements.¹⁰

Childcare in Canada is characterized by high parent fees, low accessibility, little standardization and uneven levels of quality. The only exception to this is Quebec, which introduced an affordable, publicly-funded childcare program in 1998. Outside of Quebec, however, only 24 percent of children under the age of six have access to a licensed childcare spot.

Demand for childcare is extremely high, with waitlists as long as two to three years in some regions. In some cases, families can add their name on a waitlist when they first learn they are expecting a child, only to still not gain access to a space years later when the child is of age to enter care. Growth in regulated spaces continues to fail to meet this growing demand. In 2007, the number of regulated childcare spaces in Canada grew by only three percent, the smallest annual increase so far this decade.¹¹

A lack of access to regulated childcare has led to many families relying on neighbours or relatives for informal care. In many cases, this type of care can provide a healthy, nurturing and developmentally stimulating environment for children. However, childcare that is not regulated can result in uneven levels of quality. A shortage of childcare options can result in parents leaving their children in care that is of less than the highest quality, or care that does not meet their own standards, in order to meet work and other responsibilities. Care that is lacking in quality can fail to engage the developmental potential of young children and, in severe cases, have a detrimental impact upon it.

Quality of childcare

Quality of regulated childcare is measured by a number of indicators. Staff wages, working conditions, and levels of post-secondary education, the level of financing per regulated space and whether the provider is non-profit or for-profit are all indicators of level of quality.

A study in 1998 by the University of Guelph rated the quality of regulated childcare in Canada as “mediocre to poor,”¹² and found that few programs achieved high quality standards. In 2007, a review of existing data on established indicators of quality such as staff training, wages and funding showed that there is little reason to believe that quality has improved.¹³

An investigation in 2007 by the *Toronto Star* on provincially-licensed childcare centres in Ontario uncovered reports of “thousands of incidences” of children being subject to physical and verbal abuse, unsafe conditions, serious injury or neglect. The investigation found that several hundred of the 4,400 licensed childcare centres in the province had “serious problems,” and the *Star* identified a lack of funding as a significant factor in the low quality found in many centres.¹⁴

Quality ECEC programs require higher levels of investment than public schools, in large part because the caregiver – child ratios are much smaller. As well, wages for childcare workers are generally low, and this has been found to contribute to lower quality of care. If parents are able to gain access to a childcare space, unsatisfactory levels of quality can limit the extent to which they are willing to make use of it.

Cost of Childcare

The high cost of childcare also poses a significant barrier for low and middle-income families wishing to access it. On average, childcare costs range from \$850 to \$1,400 a month per child depending upon the region.¹⁵ For many families with young children, this is comparable to the cost of university tuition or the mortgage on a house. And this cost is rising. Except for 2005, the cost of childcare has risen much more than the overall rate of inflation every year since 2003.¹⁶

This can severely limit the options of many parents that are seeking care for their children in order to work, which for many is a financial necessity. For dual-income families, the high cost of childcare can mean that it is more financially viable for the lower-income parent – generally the mother – to stay at home and provide care than to place their children in childcare while both parents are employed. However, dual employment is a financial necessity for many families, and either option can have significant financial costs for low and middle income families.

For single parents with young children, a lack of affordable childcare poses a significant barrier to accessing the paid employment needed to support their children. As single-income families are predominantly headed by females, a lack of childcare disproportionately impacts women. Many women have little option but to rely on social assistance until their children enter school, as they cannot access employment without affordable care for their children.ⁱ

Policy Context

A History of Childcare Policy in Canada

Prior to the 1960s, the role of women in Canadian society was predominantly defined by their domestic responsibilities as mother, homemaker and primary childcare provider. Before the Second World War, childcare outside of the home was generally limited to “day nurseries,” established by members of religious orders that offered care for young children of women living in poverty. This changed during the early 1940s, when many women with young children joined the workforce to assist with the war effort. In 1942 the federal government established a national system of subsidized “day nurseries” to care for the children of these working mothers, but closed the majority of them when the war ended in 1945. However, as women with children entered the workforce in increasing numbers, the demand for accessible, affordable childcare rose. In the late 1960s, women’s rights groups in Canada began lobbying the federal government for a national system of affordable childcare, as the opportunities that it could create for women were increasingly recognized. In 1967, the Report of the Commission on the Status of Women Canada echoed these demands when it recommended a national daycare program as a method of strengthening women’s equality.

ⁱ In some provinces, social assistance policies dictate that mothers with very young children must find employment if they are to continue to receive benefits. British Columbia deems mothers to be employable when their youngest child turns three years of age; in Alberta, it is when the youngest child is one year of age.

In 1970, the federal *Unemployment Act* was revised and included maternity benefits for the first time, offering a maximum of 15 weeks.

In 1983, the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association (now the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada) was founded and became a key organization in childcare advocacy. While federal and provincial government spending on childcare increased – tripling between 1979 and 1983 to \$375 million – demand for spaces still far outweighed supply.

In 1984, in response to pressure from women’s groups, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau appointed Katie Cooke (the former president of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women) to head a child care task force that would examine the state of daycare in Canada. The Task Force was to make recommendations on the “federal government’s role in the development of a national system of quality child care.” The Cooke report was released in March of 1986 and recommended the establishment of “complementary systems of parental leave and childcare as comprehensive, accessible and competent as the health care and education systems.”¹⁷

In the federal election of 1984, Conservative leader Brian Mulroney campaigned on the promise of a national daycare system. After winning the election, Mulroney established a Federal Special Parliamentary Committee on Child Care in order to assess the need for childcare. In 1987, after examining recommendations from both the committee and task force, the Mulroney government announced a \$3-billion National Child Care Strategy to reform federal childcare funding. The plan intended to create 200,000 new daycare spots over seven years, renegotiate federal-provincial responsibilities for daycare and allow for direct funding of for-profit daycare centres. The strategy also included research for children with special needs and tax benefits and credits to assist families.

This strategy was tabled in Bill C-144 and introduced in the House of Commons in July 1988. However, an election was called in November of 1988 and the bill died in the Senate. In 1992, Mulroney again promised that \$500 million would be invested in the creation of a national childcare system. However, the federal government held a series of public focus group surveys which asked Canadians to rank their opinion on the importance of a variety of social issues. The results of the survey showed that child poverty was ranked higher than childcare. The federal government cited this as justification for redirecting the funds allocated for childcare towards income supports for low-income families, and plans for a national childcare program were again shelved.

During the following decade, other policies to support families with children were established. In 1997, the Canada Child Tax Benefit was introduced which provided financial support for low-income families with children.

In 2001, maternity and parental leave was extended to 12 months as part of Employment Insurance (EI).¹⁸ While this expansion was positive, restrictions for eligibility also increased which had a negative impact on women. From 1994 to 2001, the number of women who qualified for maternity and parental benefits fell from 49% to 33%.¹⁹

Providing maternity and parental leave benefits through the EI system has a significant impact on who qualifies for benefits and how. An expectant or new parent must be employed for a consecutive number of weeks with the same employer in order to be eligible for EI benefits. However, the number of weeks

differs between provinces, from zero weeks in British Columbia to 52 weeks in Alberta.²⁰ The level of job-protection offered varies by province as well. This creates inequalities between women living in different regions, and disproportionately limits access for those with seasonal, part-time or precarious employment. Vulnerable and marginalized women – including those who are low-income, teenage mothers, disabled or recently immigrated – are more likely to have limited work experience. This places them at an additional disadvantage when attempting to access benefits.

During the 1993 federal election, the Liberal party campaigned on the promise of creating a national childcare program. However, after the Liberals won the election, their attention turned towards lowering the deficit and the promised investments in childcare were never realized.

In 2004, a national childcare plan was again on the political agenda. The Liberal Government pledged \$5 billion to create a national Early Learning and Child Care system, citing in its October throne speech that “the time has come for a truly national system of early learning and child care.” The plan promised to establish 250,000 new affordable childcare spaces by 2009. The program was to be based on the principles of Quality, Universality, Accessibility, and Child Development (the “QUAD” principles) and modeled after Quebec’s childcare program. The federal government negotiated agreements individually with provinces upon which a national program would be based, but lost the fall 2005 federal election before the plan was implemented.²¹

While childcare advocacy groups have lobbied strongly over the past four decades for the establishment of a national childcare system, their efforts have yet to be realized.

Current Government Policies

In Canada, the federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal governments share responsibility for providing childcare and related support programs and services for families with children.

The federal government: The direct provision of childcare services falls under the jurisdiction of the provincial and territorial governments. However, the federal government takes direct responsibility for specific programs, including childcare services for specific populations for which the federal government is responsible, namely new immigrants and refugees, military families, and aboriginal peoples. The federal government is also responsible for salary replacement benefits for maternity and paternity leave through EI. EI provides 55% of wages (up to a maximum of \$427 a week) for a maximum of 50 weeks for parents who are eligible.²²

The federal government also provides a combination of child benefit programs and direct childcare subsidies in order to help reduce child poverty and to assist parents with the cost of raising children.²³ The 2007-2008 federal budget provided \$5.6 billion to support families with children, with 80% of this allocated for income allowances and tax credits.

The three child income benefit programs currently in place are the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CTTB), the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) and the non-refundable Child Tax Credit (CTC).

The Canada Child Tax Benefit provides a monthly benefit to every family with children that have a net income below \$101,328. A maximum of \$3,271 is provided annually per child for families with incomes under \$20,883, and the amount of this benefit is reduced as income rises. Included in the CCTB is a

National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS), which provides additional income support to low-income families with children.²⁴ However, the 1997 federal-provincial agreement which established the NCBS also allowed provincial and territorial governments to clawback some or all of the benefit for families on social assistance. The money clawed back is intended to be reinvested in provincial and municipal programs for low-income people. While not all provinces clawback the NCBS, most do. This practice has been highly criticized by social policy analysts that claim it discriminates against the lowest-income members of the population.²⁵

For children with severe mental or physical disabilities, the federal government provides a Child Disability Benefit (CDB) through the CCTB. The CDB is tax-free and provides up to \$2,395 a year (\$199.58 a month) per child.²⁶

The Universal Child Care Benefit, which came into effect in July 2006, provides parents with \$100 a month for every child under the age of six, for a total of \$1,200.00 annually per child.²⁷ As it is provided directly by the federal government, it is not subject to provincial or territorial clawbacks. However, the benefit is subject to both federal and provincial/territorial taxes in the hands of the lower-income parent. While the UCCB is described by the federal government as a component of its “Universal Child Care Plan,” it does nothing to create childcare spaces and does very little to relieve the high cost of care. Parents often end up using the UCCB for education savings or activities for their children. While the UCCB can support families with these legitimate needs, it should not be mistaken for a universal childcare plan. The low level monetary compensation the UCCB provides is also reflective of the low value placed upon childcare and caring labour in our society.

The federal government also transfers funds to provincial and territorial governments for childcare programs and services. The 2007 budget allocated \$250 million per year in provincial/territorial transfers through the Canada Social Transfer program for childcare funding. The budget also introduced a 25 percent investment tax credit for businesses that create new child care spaces in the workplace, for up to \$10,000 per space created. However, according to the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, this has not resulted in spaces being created in workplaces. A limited number of regulated childcare spaces are subsidized for low-income families, but the number of these has not changed substantially for over a decade, despite growing demand.²⁸

The federal government is also responsible for providing leadership on issues related to childcare through negotiations and agreements with provinces and territories.

Provincial and territorial governments: The provincial and territorial governments are directly responsible for policies and regulations related to the provision of childcare services, including financing, staff training and wages, parent fees, quality standards, and monitoring. Provincial/territorial governments are also responsible for health care and training institutions for early childhood educators.²⁹

As well, each provincial and territorial government provides various types of income supports for families which supplement federal allowances and tax supports.³⁰ The provincial governments are also responsible for determining the length of maternity and parental leave and eligibility conditions for access to benefits.

Municipal governments: Municipal governments may be responsible for providing childcare services at the direction of the provincial/territorial governments.

International Rankings

Extensive studies have been done comparing levels of investment in ECEC between industrialized countries, most notably by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNICEF. While Canada's GDP ranks among the highest of all industrialized nations, investment in early childhood education and care is consistently among the lowest.

Public spending by all levels of government on ECEC currently amounts to less than 0.3 percent of GDP, with the majority of this being spent by the provincial government in Quebec. While the average Canadian province covers 38% of costs associated with childcare, public spending in Quebec is much higher, with the provincial government covering 80% of regulated childcare.³¹

The average spending on ECEC for an OECD nation is 0.7 percent of GDP. UNICEF recommends that at least 1 percent should be spent.³² In 2006, Canada ranked last in a comparison between 14 OECD countries for their ECEC investment. The same OECD report revealed that Canada has the lowest access rate for childcare in the industrialized world, and some of the highest parent fees.³³

A 2008 report by UNICEF ranked 25 OECD countries on their level of investment in ECEC based on ten minimum standards. Canada was ranked last, meeting only one standard. Evidently, Canada is far behind the majority of industrialized countries in investment in ECEC.

Policies Being Advocated

Public debates on childcare in Canada focus upon the role that parents, non-parental caregivers, public and private institutions and government should play in providing childcare. These debates focus upon questions such as: what kind of care is optimal for children? How can the needs of young children be balanced with the needs of parents to engage in paid employment and other activities? What is the role of the state in providing childcare? The diversity of childcare options – centres, in-home care by parents, care by neighbours or relatives inside or outside the child's home – are choices that parents have the responsibility to make, and these decisions should be made in the best interests of the child and its family. However, the extent to which parents are able to make these choices hinges on the availability of options that are accessible, affordable, and provide a quality environment for the child.

Governments can help parents in these choices through public policies that support families. Most governments in industrialized countries, including in Canada, provide some kind of support to assist families in raising children. Debates in Canada about the role of the federal government in supporting families have focused upon what policies can best help parents balance childrearing with employment and other responsibilities. In the past, this debate has often been polarized between proponents of policies that provide direct income supports to families and advocates for the establishment of a national childcare program. A related ongoing debate centres upon whether childcare centres should be publicly or privately funded.

Case for a national childcare program

Childcare advocacy groups in Canada have been calling on the federal government for decades to introduce a national, publicly-funded, quality childcare program that is affordable, accessible, and

promotes child development. The emphasis on these four principles is reflective of current barriers to childcare.

Advocates of a national childcare program, including the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, and the Code Blue Campaign for Childcare, argue that direct financial support does not provide sufficient support for families with children if it is not coupled with investment in childcare spaces. Current government income supplements are rarely enough to cover the high cost of childcare, and do not create more childcare spaces. They can also encourage the growth of for-profit childcare, which has been found to often be lower in quality than non-profit care.

In Canada, subsidies are often not enough to adequately cover childcare costs. While the UCCB provides families with \$100 a month for every child under six, this falls far short of the cost of childcare, which can range from between \$850 and \$1,400 a month depending upon the region. Cash transfers to parents such as the UCCB also do not create any new child care spaces, and lack of accessibility is a significant barrier to childcare for many families.

The Caledon Institute has done research examining the taxation of the UCCB and found that, next to very low-income families, the Benefit favours high-income two-parent single-income families over other types of families. The Institute concluded that the UCCB favours families with one parent providing childcare at home for ideological reasons.³⁴ The Caledon Institute argues that the UCCB does not constitute an actual child care plan, since the benefit does not contribute to creating childcare spaces. The argument has also been made that the UCCB is technically an anti-poverty program for stay-at-home parents, as it provides a direct income supplement to families regardless of their level of income. However, while \$100 a month (before taxes) may assist with childcare activities, it offers too little to be a viable income support for those living in poverty.

Another argument put forth by childcare advocacy groups against direct subsidies to parents is that it can encourage growth of for-profit childcare centres. There exist many challenges to providing quality childcare when private profit is the primary motivation. For-profit centres tend to have higher staff turn-over rates, lower levels of quality and can be more vulnerable to instability. A prime example given of this is the case of the ABC Learning Centres in Australia. For a number of years, the multinational corporation ABC Learning was the primary provider of childcare centres in Australia, and was heavily subsidized by the Australian government. In November 2008, ABC Learning Centres collapsed due to company mismanagement. The Australian government was left with \$1 billion in debt from ABC and thousands of families were left without reliable childcare. The Australian experience has been a cautionary example to other countries considering the expansion of for-profit care.

Case for direct income supports

Policy institutes such as the Fraser Institute advocate in favour of tax breaks for parents with young children instead of a national childcare program on the basis that direct income support enables parents to have more choice in how they care for their children, as the support can be used for in-home or outside home care.³⁵ The Institute advocated in favour of subsidies in response to the proposed national childcare program introduced by the Liberal government in 2005. A primary argument put forth by the Institute against a national childcare program was that it would do little to assist parents who chose to stay at home with their children. It would also offer limited assistance for parents employed in shift work or during irregular hours.

In critiquing childcare, opponents such as the Fraser Institute have also focused upon the concern that non-maternal care outside the home can have a negative impact on young children. The C.D. Howe Institute echoed this view in a study published in February of 2006 that examined the impact of Quebec's child care program on children ages four and under living in two-parent families. The study found higher rates of aggression, anxiety and depression in children receiving care outside the home. However, the study could not conclude that these indicators of higher stress levels were not similar to those of children entering kindergarten.³⁶

The Institute for Marriage and the Family Canada (IMFC) also promotes the viewpoint that it is optimal for children if one parent cares for them within the home. The IMFC advocates that, ideally, the parent to stay home should be the mother. This view is rooted in ideology regarding gender roles. The IMFC argues that Canada's tax system makes it difficult for one parent to stay home, and advocates that the government would best support families with small children if it increased the UCCB and lowered taxes on families, particularly by allowing income-splittingⁱⁱ.³⁷

Options for Moving Forward

The polarization of this policy debate became most heated during the 1980s. Since then, a greater recognition has developed within child policy advocacy circles that these policies are not necessarily opposed, but can in fact complement one another. The implementation of a variety of child and family policies – including income supports, childcare services, and parental leave – can together broaden the range of options parents have and can help them make decisions that are in the best interests of their child.³⁸ Essential to these policies is the government prioritization of families with young children, and a national strategy that recognizes the diversity of their needs.

International Examples and Comparisons

Many industrialized countries around the world have followed a similar trend as Canada with regards to an increased number of women with young children in the workforce. However, policy responses to these labour force changes have differed significantly between countries. Many countries in Europe provide free, universal pre-school for children beginning at the age of three.³⁹ Nordic countries, such as Sweden, Denmark and Finland, are all characterized by their family-focused policies, including a high level of investment in ECEC and extended parental leave.

Countries with high levels of investment in early childhood education and care are also found to have low rates of poverty. For example, Sweden ranks the highest in investment in ECEC, and also has the lowest child poverty rate of any OECD country, at 2.6 percent.ⁱⁱⁱ These low levels of child poverty can be linked to government family policies that offer income support for women with young children and promote their labour market employment. Generous maternity leave benefits, extended parental benefits and universal childcare support women and their families in balancing paid employment and raising children, and help ensure families have adequate income and access to services.⁴⁰

ⁱⁱ Income-splitting lowers income tax rates for couples where one partner earns a higher income than the other. By pooling their combined incomes, the higher income earner is able to pay their taxes in a lower income bracket, thereby reducing the amount of tax they owe.

ⁱⁱⁱ Poverty rates in this report were defined as households below 50 percent of the national median income.

Quebec's childcare program

In 1998, Quebec introduced a publicly-funded, affordable childcare program that provides care for children at the cost of \$5-a-day (now \$7-a-day) per child. This program serves approximately 209,000 children, or about 70 percent of children in Quebec under the age of five. In the ten years since the program was introduced, the program has had a significant positive impact upon families with young children.

In order to fund the childcare program, the government of Quebec discontinued a number of income support programs for families with young children – such as the family allowance, the allowance for young children and allowances for new-born children – and redirected the funds towards the creation of a childcare program. It also used Quebec's portion of the federal Child Tax Benefit and funds allocated for provincial child care income tax deductions.⁴¹

Since the introduction of the childcare program, the province has seen a 50 percent drop in child poverty rates. School test scores have gone from among the lowest to among the highest in Canada, evidence that the program has helped prepare children for formal schooling. The program has also impacted the participation of women in the workforce and the rate of women in both the formal workplace and enrolled in postsecondary education. Currently, 40 percent of the cost of the program is covered by the income tax from the revenues of women with children in care.⁴² Quebec also provides tax breaks for families that chose to opt out of the childcare program and care for their child at home or arrange private care. Generous parental leave was also introduced at the same time as the childcare program, which has enabled more parents to care for their children at home during their earliest months and years.⁴³

Despite its widespread popularity, Quebec's childcare program has received criticisms with regards to its accessibility and quality.⁴⁴ A 2005 study by the Institute for Research on Public Policy found that most Quebec childcare centres just meet minimum provincial licensing standards and do not provide as much of a learning environment as they could. And despite much higher access rates than in other provinces, the Quebec system has not yet met the high demand for spaces. Waiting lists can still be long, and some parents must rely on more expensive for-profit care while waiting for a publicly-subsidized spot.⁴⁵

Despite its shortcomings, Quebec's program goes far beyond any program in Canada to date in addressing the needs of parents for affordable childcare. It also demonstrates that, if provided with affordable ECEC, parents will make use of it.

Wider Context

Childcare and Gender Equality

Women in Canada experience greater economic insecurity than men in Canada due to both systemic discrimination in the formal labour market and because they take on an unequal share of unpaid domestic responsibilities.⁴⁶ On average, women in Canada earn less than men, are more likely to live in poverty, and are more vulnerable to becoming poor. Women in Canada earn an average of 71 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterparts.⁴⁷

As women joined the paid labour market in increasing numbers throughout the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, they have been systemically concentrated within certain fields of employment – such as

administration, health services, or clerical and secretarial positions – that generally offer lower wages than male-dominated positions. Despite the introduction of pay equity legislation in Canada over the last three decades, a gender wage gap remains.

In addition to systemic discrimination, women have lower earnings than men in large part due to the unpaid care-giving work they engage in and the unequal domestic responsibilities they carry within the household. While almost 74 percent of women in Canada ages 15 to 64 are engaged in paid work outside the home, many women – particularly those with families – also take on the traditional gender role of caregiver and homemaker.⁴⁸ Numerous studies have documented the unequal division of labour within Canadian households. One study found that in 52 percent of families in which both partners had full-time paid employment, the female partner was responsible for all the daily housework. In 28 percent the woman was mainly responsible, in 10 percent the chores were shared equally and in another 10% the man was primarily responsible.⁴⁹

In order to balance these responsibilities with paid work, women are more likely to be engaged in part-time, shift or contract work that offers fewer hours but more flexibility. In 2005, it was calculated that 27.2 percent of women were employed part-time, in comparison to only 10.9 percent of men.⁵⁰ In 2004, 18 percent of employed women said they worked part-time because of childcare and family responsibilities, compared with a 2 percent of men that were employed part-time.⁵¹ Part-time jobs are more likely to pay lower wages and fewer benefits than permanent, full-time positions. More women – 1 in 17 – work for minimum wage, compared to 1 in 30 for men.⁵² This has a significant impact on women's lifetime earnings.

As well as reducing their income, work that is part-time and/or is lower in salary also limits women's likelihood of being eligible for unemployment benefits, such as EI. This further reduces their incomes if they become unemployed. It also limits the ability of many to gain access to maternity leave benefits, as provincial regulations specify that a mother must work a certain number of hours over a designated period in order to be eligible for EI. Lower incomes over women's lifetimes also result in lower pensionable earnings, reinforcing the gender gap as women age.

The major factor in the gender wage gap has been identified as not being age, marriage or education, but the presence of children.⁵³ A Status of Women Canada report entitled *Social Policy, Gender Inequality and Poverty*, echoed this reality, saying that "motherhood has far greater consequences on women's economic security than fatherhood has on men's."⁵⁴ The costs related to raising a child from birth to age 18 has been estimated to be nearly \$167,000.⁵⁵ This cost, combined with a reduced capacity to engage in the paid workforce because of childcare and domestic responsibilities can result in lower incomes for women with children. The ages of a woman's children also has an impact on her level of employment. Women with children of pre-school age are less likely to be employed than women with school-aged children.⁵⁶

Affordable childcare has long been recognized as a policy that could have a positive impact on women's equality. In 1967, the Report of the Commission on the Status of Women Canada recommended a national childcare program as a method of strengthening women's equality. The 1984 Royal Commission on Equality in Employment also identified a lack of accessible, affordable childcare as a significant barrier to the workforce for women who are mothers, and recommended the creation of universal, quality childcare.⁵⁷ ECEC programs can assist mothers with their caring responsibilities, enable them to

engage in paid employment if they choose, and provide them with greater flexibility and choice in balancing the two.

Childcare as Poverty Reduction

As a result of their greater economic vulnerability, women with children experience a higher likelihood of living in poverty and a greater risk of falling into poverty. This is particularly true for lone mothers. As of 2006, 15.9 percent of families were headed by lone-parents, and 80.1 percent of these families were headed by women. In 2003, 38 percent of all families headed by lone-parent mothers had incomes which fell below the after-tax Low Income Cut-offs^{iv}. In comparison, this was the case for only 13 percent of male lone-parent families.

The poverty experienced by women directly impacts their families, particularly their children. Almost 760,000 children – almost 1 child in 9 – live in poverty in Canada, a number that has not changed significantly in the past twenty years.⁵⁸

The detrimental impact that poverty has on human health and well-being is substantial and can be long-term. Children who grow up living in poverty are more likely to have lower test scores in school, are less likely to be employed, and are more likely to earn less when they are employed than their counterparts from higher-income families. They are also more likely to experience health problems throughout their lives and be in trouble with the law.⁵⁹ These, in turn, have multiple negative impacts upon society as a whole.

Childcare advocacy organizations, such as Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, have promoted childcare as a necessary policy for reducing child and family poverty. Likewise, anti-poverty organizations such as the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction, Canada Without Poverty, Campaign 2000, Food Banks Canada and the Canadian Council on Social Development have consistently identified childcare as a critical component of any effective poverty reduction strategy.

Access to affordable, quality childcare can help reduce poverty by enabling women to pursue employment outside the home, thereby raising her family's income. This is true for both single and dual-income families. It has been estimated that the earnings of women in dual-income families keep thousands of Canadian families above the poverty line. According to Statistics Canada, if women's earnings were deducted from the dual-earner family, the number of families living below the Low-Income Cut-off would almost triple, from 120,000 to over 400,000.⁶⁰ Affordable childcare would also reduce the currently high cost for parents, which would make income available for parents to use elsewhere.

Childcare is also an important component of poverty reduction because of the opportunities it can provide young children. According to the Caledon Institute, "quality early childhood interventions have been shown to improve performance in school, lessen the learning risks associated with low income and enhance parents' childrearing and coping skills."⁶¹ High quality care for children has also been found to

^{iv} Canada does not currently have an official definition of poverty. Therefore, Statistics Canada uses the Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO) measure to determine the low-income status of individuals and families in Canada. Using the LICO measure, families or individuals are classified as "low income" if they spend, on average, at least 20 percentage points more of their after-tax income than the Canadian average on food, shelter, and clothing, with 1992 used as the base year for this calculation.

partially mitigate the effects of poverty and disadvantage for low-income children by promoting development and helping alleviate the social exclusion that can result from poverty. The Ontario government's Poverty Reduction Strategy intends to introduce all-day kindergarten for four and five-year old children beginning in 2010 as a way of helping parents to engage in employment and provide children with learning opportunities earlier in life.

Childcare and the Economy

A healthy economy is necessary for individuals in society to gain stable employment, from which they derive their livelihood and the resources necessary for their health and well-being. In our market-based consumer society, economic policy is grounded in the belief that economic growth is the primary determinant of individual and societal well-being. However, without mechanisms to encourage the redistribution of resources, economic growth can lead to increases in inequality. CPJ believes that the primary objective of government economic policy should be to promote human dignity and well-being and work towards the common good. Affordable childcare programs could contribute to CPJ's vision of an economy of care by offering opportunities that help children and their families thrive.

Increasingly, economists are identifying investment in childcare programs as being a sound economic policy that can offer short, medium and long-term social and economic benefits to society.⁶² Investment in services such as education promotes knowledge, skills and well-being that help enable individuals to succeed and provides the economy with a skilled and competent workforce.

While investment in quality childcare is more costly than other stages of education, it has also been shown to provide greater long-term social and economic returns. Promoting the learning and development of children at a young age has been shown to improve school performance and health, and reduce anti-social behavior over the child's lifetime. This not only benefits the child, but society as a whole through savings in health care, social services and the justice system. A Canadian cost-benefit study revealed that every dollar spent on a universal, quality childcare program in Canada would result in \$2 in return due to savings in these services.⁶³

Childcare also has short-term benefits by enabling women with young children to enter the workforce if they choose. Currently, the workforce participation of women with young children contributes an estimated \$53 billion annually to Canada's GDP.⁶⁴ It also enables women to pursue further education, which contributes to both a skilled workforce and strengthens the status of women.

Investments in childcare are also sound investments in social infrastructure. Social infrastructure can be defined as "a system of social services, networks and facilities that support people and communities."⁶⁵ The creation of childcare services creates jobs that are local, leading to greater spending in the local economy. And childcare is labour intensive, requiring the employment of more people than other sectors. During periods of economic downturn, investments in childcare can be more effective in creating economic stimulus than a similar level of investment in physical infrastructure, such as building roads or bridges.

Childcare is also an environmentally sustainable investment. They provide a service that people need, and do not require the extraction of finite resources from the environment or the destruction of biodiversity.

As well, providing support for policies such as childcare can also encourage families to have more children. Currently, Canada is facing an aging population and declining birthrates, and labour shortages in the future have been predicted if this trend is not reversed. A number of other OECD countries have identified investments in childcare services as a policy that can help encourage birth rates to rise in countries with declining populations.⁶⁶ While immigration may sustain our population in the short-term, policies that support families will also help ensure our birthrates are sustainable.

2. Core Principles and Values

Citizens for Public Justice grounds its work in the belief that the earth and all the life upon it is created and sustained by God.⁶⁷ All people, created to live in dignity as God's image-bearers, are called to be stewards of creation and practice justice and compassion as the foundation for peace and joy in their relationships with one another. CPJ believes that every person has a rightful claim to live in dignity, be respected by others and have access to resources needed to live out God's calling. They also have the responsibility to act justly, care for creation and work for peaceful and just relations within society at all levels.

As CPJ understands it, the role of government is to promote just relations between people within God's creation, correct injustice in a way that restores relationships, protect the environment and foster conditions that enhance the common good.⁶⁸ Government can do this through adopting fair laws and enforcing them equitably, recognizing rights and responsibilities, identifying and resolving injustices and ensuring access to infrastructure and public services that benefit all.

Responsibility of Parenting

In our society, care for children is accepted as predominantly the private responsibility of parents. Parents have social rights and responsibilities to care and provide for their children. A religious understanding of parenting views children as a gift from God, and sees parents as being entrusted with the responsibility of caring for their children. There are also biological motivations for parents to provide care for their children – including passing on their genes – as well as emotional motivations, such as the strong bond between parents and their children. While fathers are taking on increasing responsibility in this regard, mothers generally still fill the role of primary caregiver. Strong value is placed upon the autonomy of parents to decide what is best for their children without interference from the state or other bodies. This is based upon the understanding that parents are in the best position to make decisions in the interests of their children. The recognition of parental rights is accompanied by the expectation that parents have the responsibility to provide their children with a loving, nurturing and stable home environment that enables them to develop and grow in dignity, enjoy good health and live in well-being.

However, in cases of parental abuse or neglect, it is understood that the state has a responsibility to ensure care if it is the best interests of the child. It is also generally accepted that the state has a role to play in assisting parents with their parenting responsibilities through creating and providing funding for social and physical infrastructure such as public education and health care, and regulating these to ensure they meet designated standards. Education is regarded as a right for children, as it contributes fundamentally to their growth through socialization, skill development, and knowledge, among other areas. For example, the completion of high school is widely considered to be a minimum requirement of sustainable employment.

Gender and Work

Our society places high value on paid employment in the market economy, and monetary compensation of work is reflective of the value placed upon it. This compensation is often intended to reflect the education, skills training and experience of the worker, the complexity or difficulty of the work, and the value of the product. In reality, however, it is often also reflective of the cultural and social values placed upon both the type of work and the personal characteristics of the worker, such as their race or gender. Depending upon the context, society places different levels of value on parenting responsibilities. As it has no direct monetary value, in the context of a market economy, parenting holds little value. Value that is placed upon it is related to its economic function, with parenting being viewed as an important component of creating adults who will function as consumers and producers of material goods.

Both our market-based economy and our society systemically undervalue work that is traditionally done by women. Childcare and domestic labour has traditionally been unpaid work performed by women within the home. Increasingly, these kinds of labour are being offered as services within the market economy. The low monetary compensation that traditional “women’s work” receives within the marketplace reflects the lack of value placed upon it by our society. For example, childcare professions are overwhelmingly staffed by women and these occupations have some of the lowest rates of pay in Canada. This is in part due to underlying social perceptions that childcare does not demand skill or education, and is not difficult work, despite being the contrary.

The lack of value placed upon traditional “women’s work” such as childcare and domestic labour is reflected in the growing phenomenon of middle and upper-income families in Canada employing immigrants as nannies and domestic help. The federal government’s Live-in Caregiver program allows families to sponsor nannies from overseas – most commonly women from the Philippines – to work as live-in childcare providers. The program attracts immigrants seeking employment, and allows them to apply for permanent residency in Canada after working for two years in a family’s home. However, the wages are generally low, and many nannies experience unsafe working conditions or mistreatment in the hands of their employers. Some are illegal immigrants, which leaves them even more vulnerable to exploitative working conditions.

As well, many are vulnerable to scams by bogus agencies and to being trafficked and forced to work against their will. A recent investigation by the Toronto Star revealed that “hundreds of foreign-trained nannies have found themselves working illegally in menial jobs, without their passports and owing thousands to job agencies” that have charged them high fees for job placements that do not actually exist.⁶⁹ If women are to achieve greater gender equality, the types of work that women have traditionally done – and still commonly engage in – must be valued by society, both within the formal labour market and beyond it.

Canadians’ Current Beliefs on Childcare

In September 2008, Environics conducted a national poll on behalf of the Code Blue for Child Care Campaign. The poll surveyed Canadians’ attitudes on the importance of quality childcare. It revealed that a lack of affordable childcare is a matter of concern for a majority of Canadians, with 77 percent of Canadians believing that the lack of affordable childcare in Canada is a very (31 percent) or somewhat (46 percent) serious problem in Canada today. There is substantial support for a strong government role in the matter, with 83 percent of respondents believing that governments have a very important (35 percent) or somewhat important (48 percent) role to play in helping parents meet their childcare needs.

This majority was found across partisan lines. And concern about the issue of childcare was not only reserved for women with small children – 75 percent of men expressed concern over the issue (compared to 79 percent of women) as well.⁷⁰ This poll revealed the high importance that Canadians place on the issue of childcare and the belief that government has a role to play in offering opportunities for quality childcare.

Another poll conducted in October of 2008 by Nanos Research on behalf of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers revealed Canadians' preference for a national childcare plan over the current federal childcare allowance. The poll found that almost twice as many Canadians were in support of a national childcare plan (58 percent) instead of the current Universal Child Care Benefit monthly allowance, which was supported by only 30 percent of respondents.⁷¹ Evidently, most Canadians believe that current government policy on childcare has not sufficiently met the needs of parents with young children in Canada.

3. CPJ's Work on Childcare

CPJ first entered the childcare debate in the 1980s. At the time, publicly-funded childcare was understood to be "daycare" – a service that provided institutionalized care for children while their parents worked, but did not offer educational or developmental benefits. Since then, a growth in scientific knowledge regarding early childhood development has led to a greater understanding of the benefits of ECEC for children. It is important to take the context of this previous understanding of "daycare" into account when examining CPJ's past policy positions.

In February of 1986, CPJ submitted a pre-budget proposal to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. The document outlined CPJ's proposal for the creation of an \$11 billion Social Development and Job Creation Fund. The proposal included budgeting \$1.3 billion for adequate non-profit daycare facilities, particularly for low-income people. The Fund also proposed a number of other measures to promote employment and social well-being, such as job creation and training, affordable housing and a Guaranteed Annual Income.⁷²

CPJ's position on childcare during the Cooke Task Force (1984-1986) centered on the belief that childcare policies should recognize the rights and responsibilities of parents to choose what kind of care their children are provided with. CPJ believed that policies should equally encourage a diversity of childcare options and not be biased in favour of one form of childcare over another. CPJ therefore advocated for government subsidization of childcare to be provided directly to families through income supports, which would allow them to spend it on the care of their choice.

In his statement to the Cooke Taskforce on Child Care in 1986, Gerald Vandezande outlined CPJ's view that "public policies related to childcare should enable parents to exercise their responsibility as primary provider for their children" and that "the government has a responsibility to ensure that parents have access to the resources they need to carry out these responsibilities." Vandezande's brief recommends the implementation of a combination of policies to support families, including a guaranteed annual income, government standardization of childcare quality, and the encouragement of non-profit daycare programs. Vandezande also advocated for the recognition of childcare at home as a valuable contribution to society.

While CPJ's view on daycare at the time took into account the need for a combination of programs and services to support young children and their families, it did not fully take into account the value of investment in both childcare spaces in addition to individual income supports. While income supports can provide financial assistance for parents who choose to stay home with their children, they do not create affordable childcare spaces for parents who wish to work or engage in other activities.

On June 12, 1986, CPJ presented a submission to the Federal Special Parliamentary Committee on Child Care. The document examined the debate on childcare at the time and emphasized the importance of both public and private responsibilities for childcare.⁷³ The submission advocates for the development of a "pluralistic approach to childcare" by creating policies which recognize that various bodies in society all play a role in promoting the well-being of children.⁷⁴ CPJ expressed its concern about the creation of a national daycare program, stating that "direct funding to day care centres would restrict parental choice by financially encouraging parents to use the day care option".

In a press release dated the same day, CPJ-Ontario urged for a "new approach to child care" that offered an alternative to the "two-pronged" debate on the issue that was occurring in the 1980s. According to CPJ, the debate at the time was divided between proponents of a national, universal daycare system or a combination of for-profit, non-profit, and informal care. CPJ advocated for a pluralistic approach to daycare that emphasized the development of social infrastructure or "an integrated range of community networks and services which foster healthy mutual relationships" in order to maximize parental choice.

A press release in December of 1987 expressed CPJ's disappointment with the Conservative government's National Child Care Strategy that was created in the wake of the Cooke task force for not going far enough in providing funding and support for families with young children.⁷⁵

In the 1988 Jan-Feb. issue of *Catalyst*, CPJ expanded its response to the Strategy. It praised the fact that the system recognized a diversity of needs, but criticized it for not providing parents with enough choice, establishing quality standards or addressing the low pay and poor working conditions of daycare workers.⁷⁶

A decade later, CPJ again addressed the issue of childcare, but with an altered perspective. While still emphasizing the importance of parental choice and child well-being, CPJ advocated in favour of federal investment in ECEC as an important component of a variety of policies that can promote the dignity and well-being of children and families.

On September 9, 1999, CPJ presented a submission to the Pre-Budget Consultations of the Standing Committee of Finance of the House of Commons entitled *Fulfilling the Promise: Let's Invest in Canada's Children*. In the submission, CPJ made a series of recommendations for budget priorities. This included investment in Early Childhood Learning and Development over a five year period by making a commitment to the development of "a national fund for early childhood learning and development and [investment in] community programs which enhance the health and wellbeing of all children."

In September of 2000, a CPJ analysis entitled "An Early Childhood Development Agreement" stated that "childcare should be a choice of parents, and whatever mix of childcare they choose, the government has a responsibility to offer affordable access to a range of early childhood development services, including community services for parents who stay home with their children and programs for children

whose parents work. Businesses, unions and churches all have a role to play as well.” This position was repeated on August 10, 2000 in CPJ’s brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance 2001 Pre-Budget Consultations entitled “Investing in our top growth stock: Canada’s children.”

In November of 2004, CPJ made a submission to the Standing Committee on Finance Pre-Budget Consultations entitled “Repaying a Debt to Canada’s Children,” which again recommends making investment in Early Learning and Child Care a budget priority.

4. Public Justice Factors

CPJ’s understanding of public justice is rooted in a vision for our society which heeds God’s call to practice love, justice and stewardship and to work towards the common good. The Bible tells us that, as individuals, we are all created in the image of God. Therefore, as God’s image-bearers, we each have the right to live with well-being and dignity, and to have sufficient access to the basic resources that allow us to do so. We also share a responsibility to promote the well-being of one another in our society through showing care and respect for our neighbours. We have a particular responsibility to care for those who are least likely to be treated with dignity, such as the poor, vulnerable and marginalized.

CPJ recognizes that society is made up of a variety of actors – citizens, governments, civil society organizations, and other bodies – that all have a role to play in promoting justice and compassion in society. CPJ believes the role of the government is to seek the common good by promoting just relationships between individuals and groups in society. While individuals can seek justice in their relationships with one another, governments have a unique ability to promote justice through redistributing resources and providing services and support that encourage people to thrive in all areas of life. Because of this ability, governments also have a special responsibility to care for the vulnerable and marginalized in our society and ensure they have the resources and opportunities with which to live in dignity. In turn, citizens have a responsibility to call upon their governments to ensure that they fulfill these responsibilities.⁷⁷

One way in which government can promote human well-being is by supporting families. Families are a fundamental social unit in our society, and play an important role in nurturing and supporting the individuals within them. CPJ recognizes that families take on a diversity of forms that extend beyond the traditional nuclear family of a heterosexual couple and their children to include blended families, same-sex couples with children, children being raised by grandparents or other guardians, and other variations. As primary caregivers for their children, parents have the very important responsibility of creating a warm, loving, stable and developmentally stimulating environment in which their children can grow and thrive. In order to fulfill this responsibility, parents must have adequate income for –and access to – sufficient resources for their families to live in dignity and well-being. This includes access to adequate shelter, food and clothing, as well as access to services, including community, education and health services. CPJ believes that the government has a responsibility to ensure that parents have access to the resources they need to carry out their responsibilities as primary caregivers for their children. Policies that provide affordable, quality ECEC is one way that governments can fulfill this responsibility.

Affordable, accessible childcare can promote more equitable opportunities and relations within society. It can provide parents with greater flexibility and support in fulfilling their childrearing responsibilities and balancing these with other responsibilities such as paid employment. It can offer greater choice for parents regarding how their children are cared for, and help enable them to make decisions about

childcare that are in the best interests of their children and not because of financial or other circumstances. It can also contribute to the rights and dignity of children by offering valuable educational opportunities for them that promote their social, linguistic and cognitive development, and strengthen social inclusion.

Childcare is only one of many government policies that can promote public justice by supporting families and providing them with access to resources and opportunities that help them thrive. Policies that provide a guaranteed livable income, income supplements, extended maternity and parental leave benefits, affordable housing, community support services, accessible and affordable health and educational services, and workplace policies such as flexible hours and on-site childcare all can contribute to the well-being of families.

These policies recognize the role that a variety of social structures and communities can play in both meeting the needs of parents and promoting child development. Empowering the structures of local communities can promote greater participation of parents and children in community life and facilitate the inclusion of marginalized groups.

All levels of government have a role to play in seeking public justice through creating policies that support families with young children. The capacity of municipal, provincial/territorial and federal governments differ from one another, and policies at each level may be designed to complement one another. Each policy by itself can contribute to an economy of care in which human dignity for all is respected. And when implemented together, they can create a social context in which the health and well-being of children and their families are paramount.

5. Questions for Moving Forward

1. What should be the role of the federal government in addressing the need for a national childcare program in Canada?
2. What is the working relationship between the federal and provincial governments on the issue of childcare? What would be the constitutional responsibility of each if a national childcare program was established? How would negotiations be made?
3. What would a publicly-funded, national ECEC program in Canada look like?
4. CPJ does not currently have a policy on gender relations and women's equality. What is CPJ's position on women's equality in the context of our policy on childcare?
5. How can CPJ's policy on childcare be incorporated into our policy on poverty reduction and in relation to the *Dignity for All* Campaign?

End Notes

- ¹ Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia, "Special Report on Healthy Early Childhood Development in B.C.," 2005, 1, http://www.rcybc.ca/Groups/Archived%20Reports/cyo_edc_report.pdf.
- ² Statistics Canada. "Women in Canada: A gender-based statistical report 2005," 105, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/89-503-x2005001-eng.pdf>.
- ³ Armine Yalnizyan, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, "Income Inequality and the Pursuit of Prosperity," Walter Gordon Massey Symposium, March 10, 2009, http://www.policyalternatives.ca/~ASSETS/DOCUMENT/National_Office_Pubs/2009/Walter_Gordon_lecture_on_income_inequality-1.pdf.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Daycare: the Debate Over Space," February 11, 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/consumer/story/2009/02/06/f-daycare.html>.
- ⁶ United Nation's Children's Fund Innocenti Research Centre, "The child care transition: A league table of early childhood education and care in economically advanced countries," December 2008, 3, http://www.unicef.ca/portal/Secure/Community/502/WCM/HELP/take_action/Advocacy/rc8.pdf.
- ⁷ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care," 2006, 298, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/16/44/37423348.pdf>.
- ⁸ Statistics Canada, "Women in Canada: A gender-based statistical report, 2005, *Minister of Industry* (2006): 108, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/89-503-x2005001-eng.pdf>.
- ⁹ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care," 2006, 301, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/16/44/37423348.pdf>.
- ¹⁰ Statistics Canada, "Child Care: An Eight-Year Profile," *The Daily*, April 5, 2006, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/060405/dq060405a-eng.htm>.
- ¹¹ Childcare Resource and Research Unit, "Child Care Space Statistics 2007 (Summary)," March 2007,
- ¹² Childcare Resource and Research Unit, "Trends and Analysis 2007: Early Childhood Education and Care," 2006, http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/other/TandA/Trends_Analysis07.pdf.
- ¹³ Childcare Resource and Research Unit, "Trends and Analysis 2007: Early Childhood Education and Care," 2006, http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/other/TandA/Trends_Analysis07.pdf.
- ¹⁴ Robert Cribb, Dale Brazao, "Dirty Little Secrets: Abuse in Daycares," *Toronto Star*, May 28, 2007, <http://www.thestar.com/News/article/218357>.
- ¹⁵ Trish Crawford, "Parenting: Why It's Bad to Cheat the Nanny," *Toronto Star*, 28 February 2009, <http://www.parentcentral.ca/parent/article/592546>.
- ¹⁶ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Daycare: the Debate Over Space," February 11, 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/consumer/story/2009/02/06/f-daycare.html>.
- ¹⁷ Martha Friendly, "It was 20 years ago today...March 8, 1986," *Childcare Resource and Research Unit*, March 3, 2006.
- ¹⁸ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, "Looking Beyond the Surface: An Indepth Review of Parental Benefits," *Ministry of Labour*, http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/labour/employment_standards/fls/submissions/formal_briefs/brief44/page02.shtml.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ CBC Archives. "Who Cares for Our Kids? The Changing Face of Day Care in Canada: 1942-2005," www.cbcarchives.ca.
- ²² Childcare Resource and Research Unit, "Trends and Analysis 2007: Early Childhood Education and Care," 2006, http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/other/TandA/Trends_Analysis07.pdf.
- ²³ Ken Battle, "A \$5,000 Canada Child Tax Benefit: Questions and Answers," *The Caledon Institute of Social Policy*, January 2008, 1-3.
- ²⁴ Government of Canada, "Canada's Universal Childcare Plan," <http://www.universalchildcare.ca/eng/faq/index.shtml>.

-
- ²⁵ National Council of Welfare, "Clawback of Canada Child Tax Benefit Discriminates Against Single-Parent Mothers, Says Welfare Council," (1998), <http://www.ncwcnbes.net/documents/researchpublications/OtherPublications/1998Report-ChildBenefits/PressReleaseENG.htm>.
- ²⁶ Canada Revenue Agency. "About the Child Disability Benefit," http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/fq_cdb-eng.html#q1.
- ²⁷ Government of Canada, Universal Child Care Program, 2009, <http://www.universalchildcare.ca/en/support/intro.shtml>.
- ²⁸ Martha Friendly, Jane Beach, Carolyn Ferns and Michele Turiano, "Early childhood education & care in Canada, 2006," Childcare Resource & Research Unit, 2007, <http://www.childcarecanada.org/>.
- ²⁹ Childcare Resource and Research Unit, "Trends and Analysis 2007: Early Childhood Education and Care," 2006, http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/other/TandA/Trends_Analysis07.pdf.
- ³⁰ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care," 2006, 299, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/16/44/37423348.pdf>.
- ³¹ Julie Cool, "Child Care in Canada: Regulated, Unregulated, Private or Public," *Political and Social Affairs Division, Library of Parliament*, 3 June 2004, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/prb0418-e.htm#public>.
- ³² Canadian Union of Postal Employees, "UNICEF flunks Canada on Child Care," December 11, 2008, <http://cupe.ca/child-care/unicef-early-childhood-education>.
- ³³ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care," 2006, 299, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/16/44/37423348.pdf>.
- ³⁴ The Caledon Institute for Social Policy, "Finding Common Ground on Childcare," February 2006, <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/572ENG.pdf>.
- ³⁵ The Fraser Institute, "The Fraser Forum," May 2005, 7, http://www.fraserinstitute.org/commerce.web/product_files/May05ffleroy.pdf.
- ³⁶ Michael Baker, Jonathan Gruber and Kevin Milligan, "What Can We Learn from Quebec's Universal Childcare Program?" *C.D. Howe Institute*, February 1, 2006, http://www.cdhowe.org/pdf/ebrief_25_english.pdf.
- ³⁷ Andrea Mrozak, "Getting Children Out of the House," *IMFC Review*, Spring/Summer 2008, 10-14, http://www.imfcanada.org/article_files/a.pdf.
- ³⁸ Dr. Donna Lero, University of Guelph, phone interview, March 12, 2009.
- ³⁹ United Nation's Children's Fund Innocenti Research Centre, "The child care transition: A league table of early childhood education and care in economically advanced countries," December 2008, 3, http://www.unicef.ca/portal/Secure/Community/502/WCM/HELP/take_action/Advocacy/rc8.pdf.
- ⁴⁰ Organization for Economic Co-operation, "Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care: Sweden," 2001, 176-178, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/44/16/1942365.pdf>.
- ⁴¹ Jocelyne Tougas, "Child Care in Canada: Where There's a Will, There's a Way," *Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada*, http://www.acpsqe.ca/PDF/research/QUE_CHILD CARE.pdf.
- ⁴² Laurie Monsebraaten, "Copy Quebec Daycare, PQ Leader Says," *Toronto Star*, October 28, 2008, <http://www.parentcentral.ca/parent/article/523608>.
- ⁴³ The Globe and Mail, "Pauline Marios: The Softer, Gentler Face of Quebec Sovereignty," October 27, 2008, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20081027.wlhampson27/BNStory/politics/>.
- ⁴⁴ Christa Japel, Richard E. Tremblay and Sylvana Cote, "Quality Counts! Assessing the Quality of Daycare Services Based on the Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development," *Institute for Research on Public Policy: Choices*, 11, no. 5, (December 2005), <http://www.irpp.org/choices/archive/vol11no5.pdf>.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Colin Lindsay and Marcia Almey, "Women in Canada: A gender-based statistical report," *Statistics Canada*, (2005), 133-144, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/89-503-x2005001-eng.pdf>.
- ⁴⁷ Canadian Labour Congress, "Women in the Labour Force: Still a Long Way From Equality," 2008, www.canadianlabour.ca.
- ⁴⁸ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care," 2006, 297, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/16/44/37423348.pdf>. CPJ Backgrounder on Childcare
-

-
- ⁴⁹ Katherine Marshall, "Employed parents & the division of housework," *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, Autumn 1993, 26, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/cgi-bin/af-fdr.cgi?l=eng&loc=http://www.statcan.gc.ca/studies-etudes/75-001/archive/e-pdf/68eng.pdf&t=Employed%20parents%20and%20the%20division%20of%20housework>.
- ⁵⁰ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care," 2006, 297, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/16/44/37423348.pdf>.
- ⁵¹ Kristen Wilkinson, "Women's Employment Patterns and the Need for Child Care," *Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) and the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC)*, June 2007, http://209.85.173.132/search?q=cache:cG8ajqc9PI4J:www.fafia-afai.org/files/fafia_ccaac_childcarefinal.doc+women%27s+employment+patterns+and+the+need+for+child+care&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=ca.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Statistics Canada, "As Time Goes By...Time Use of Canadians," *Minister of Industry*, Ottawa: 1995, 22.
- ⁵⁴ Status of Women Canada, "Social Policy, Gender Inequality and Poverty, Chapter 2: Literature Review,"
- ⁵⁵ Canadian Council on Social Development, "Families: A Canadian Profile," *CCSD Stats & Facts*, 2004, <http://www.ccsd.ca/factsheets/family/>.
- ⁵⁶ Statistics Canada, "Women in Canada: A gender-based statistical report," 2005, 109. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/89-503-x2005001-eng.pdf>.
- ⁵⁷ Judge Rosalie Silberman Abella. "Equality in Employment: A Royal Commission Report, General Summary," *Commission on Equality in Employment*, 1984, 7, <https://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/cws/article/viewFile/12792/11875>.
- ⁵⁸ Campaign 2000, "Family Security in Insecure Times: The Case for a Poverty Reduction Strategy for Canada," *2008 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada*, www.campaign2000.ca.
- ⁵⁹ Dennis Raphael, "Poverty and Policy in Canada: Implications for Health and Quality of Life," Canadian Scholars' Press,, 2007, 290.
- ⁶⁰ Statistics Canada, Women in Canada – a Gender-based Statistical Report," Minister of Industry, 24, <http://dsp-psd.tpsgc.gc.ca/Collection-R/Statcan/89-503-X/0010589-503-XIE.pdf>.
- ⁶¹ Sherri Torjman, "Poverty Policy," *The Caledon Institute of Social Policy*, October 2008, 6, <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/720ENG.pdf>.
- ⁶² Childcare Resource and Research Unit, "Why Canada Can't Work Without Good Child Care: How Early Childhood Education and Care Supports the Economy," Child Care Briefing Notes, 2008.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ Kristen Wilkinson, "Women's Employment Patterns and the Need for Child Care," *Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) and the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC)*, June 2007.
- ⁶⁵ Lesley Baddon, "Social Infrastructure," *Auckland Regional Growth Strategy*, 1999, 54, http://www.nziaia.org.nz/Conference/1999/pdf/D2a05_ARGS_4LB1.pdf.
- ⁶⁶ United Nation's Children's Fund Innocenti Research Centre, "The child care transition: A league table of early childhood education and care in economically advanced countries," December 2008, 4, http://www.unicef.ca/portal/Secure/Community/502/WCM/HELP/take_action/Advocacy/rc8.pdf.
- ⁶⁷ CPJ. Public Justice: What does it mean for citizens, governments and CPJ?" 2007, 2.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Dale Brazao and Robert Cribb, "Star Investigation Part 1: Nannies Trapped in Bogus Jobs," *Toronto Star*, March 14, 2009, <http://www.parentcentral.ca/parent/article/602352>.
- ⁷⁰ Environics Survey, "Canada Still Needs Child Care," retained by Code Blue for Child Care, Oct. 2008, www.buildchildcare.ca.
- ⁷¹ Canadian Union of Postal Employees, "Most prefer childcare to cheques: poll," October 9, 2008.
- ⁷² Citizens for Public Justice Ontario, "A Proposal that the Federal Government Establish an \$11 Billion Social Development and Job Creation Fund," February 24, 1986.
- ⁷³ Citizens for Public Justice, "Submission to the Federal Special Parliamentary Committee on Child Care," June 12, 1986.
- ⁷⁴ Citizens for Public Justice, "CPJ Urges New Approach," *Catalyst*, 9, no. 8, September 1986.
-

⁷⁶ Citizens for Public Justice. "Child care debate continues," *Catalyst*, 11, no. 3, January-February 1988.

⁷⁷ Public Justice: What does it mean for citizens, governments and CPJ?" 2007, 2.