NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO DAY CARE NEWS

May 1991

DAY CARE NEWS is a forum for the sharing of information between day care groups throughout the region, as well as providing information about what is happening on the federal, provincial, regional and local scenes, in terms of policy, legislation, advocacy groups' activities, parental concerns and other interests that our supporters may have.

We hope that this newsletter will combat some of the isolation that day care workers and advocates feel and that through the sharing of resources, ideas and action plans, we can develop strategies to ensure the growth and strengthening of quality day care in Northwestern Ontario.

We welcome submissions to this newsletter from every day care centre and committee throughout our region. Please send articles, news clippings, letters, etc. to Box 144, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7C 4V5.

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*Please note the NWORDCC membership drive letter included in this newsletter. Please pass it on if you are already a member.
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Minimal Growth of Subsidized Spaces in Northwestern Ontario

by Lynn Carlson
Supervising Early Childhood Educator
Dryden Day Care Centre

On January 31, 1991, Zanana Akande announced that 5,000 of the 10,000 additional subsidized spaces recommended by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care had been created. Unfortunately the north will be receiving only 176 of the 5,000 spaces. The north begins at Muskoka which is only two hours away from Toronto. There were already 1,000 children on waiting lists in Northwestern Ontario alone, as of January 1, 1991. If approximately 75% of these children qualify for subsidy, how far will 176 additional spaces go when these must be shared with Northeastern Ontario? It has been determined that 51 of these new subsidies will be given to the Northwest.

There seems to be a real inconsistency in the way that subsidies are distributed. For example, Fort Frances is licensed for 48 children and is approved for 33 subsidized spaces. Sioux Lookout has a license capacity of 48 and has 28 approved subsidized spaces available. In Atikokan, only 8 subsidized spaces are available through the municipality for 39 children.

But, in Dryden, we presently have ministry approval to subsidize 45 children (our full enrolment), if their families are determined through needs testing to be eligible. (All of our parents are encouraged to take this needs test with no stigma attached.) Approval has already been given for three additional subsidy spaces when our license increases to accommodate 48 children in our new building.

Our town treasurer and the support our child care centre receives from our town council and administrative staff can be given the credit for the success Dryden has had in obtaining subsidized spaces. We have applied for additional spaces in stages as our families' needs have changed. We are now servicing more single parent families than ever before. We ensure that the requests are accompanied by documentation that demonstrates the need for more spaces (using such information as waiting list figures). Our program supervisor has been very cooperative and supportive of our program needs.

We have returned that cooperation by giving up some subsidized spaces when the ministry requests or during periods of low enrolment. We reapply when enrolment increases. When problems have arisen between the town administration and the Ministry office, the town has not hesitated to arrange meetings with higher levels of government. It is a shame that our situation is not consistent within other communities.

It seems that the problem of obtaining adequate numbers of subsidy spaces may be at the municipal level rather than the provincial. Should the distribution of subsidized spaces be determined by the abilities and willingness of municipal leaders and municipal administration to negotiate with government officials? Since some communities are not as prosperous as others, complete provincial funding of subsidized spaces could even out some of the discrepancies.

Child care spaces should be universally available and families in need should have the opportunity to have child care costs subsidized. The 51 additional spaces allocated for all of Northwestern Ontario cannot do much to change the present situation.

Editor's Note:

The way the provincial government distributed the 5,000 subsidized spaces was as follows:

Toronto: 4,000 spaces
Ottawa : 500 spaces
Rest of Ontario: 500 spaces according to population

PRIVATE HOME DAY CARE CONFERENCE

The City of Thunder Bay will be hosting the 1991 Private Home Day Care Conference this **SEPTEMBER 25th, 26th, 27th** at the Valhalla Inn. The NWORDCC is looking for a delegate to send to this conference. If you operate a private home day care program and you wish to attend please let Margaret or Barbara know.

Sandra Livingston, the Children's Services Coordinator with the City's Social Services Department is looking for volunteers to work on the following committees:

Pre-registration - on site registration, desk accomodation
Meals, coffee breaks
Hospitality suite
Workshop host/hostess
Entertainment (Thursday evening)
Commercial exhibits
Workshop set up - posters/signs
News media
Evaluation form
Silent auction - fund raising
Wine & cheese evening
Speaker/workshop leaders (honorarium)
Audio-visual (workshop requests)
Promotional items (available for purchase)
Transportation (airport/hotel)
Program brochure
Conference kits

If you wish to participate as a volunteer contact Sandra Livingston, 86 S. Cumberland St., Thunder Bay, ONT P7B 6G7

6TH ANNUAL FORUM A GREAT SUCCESS

The sixth Annual NW Ontario Regional Day Care Forum convened in Thunder Bay on March 22/23, 1991. The forum brought together 78 child care advocates (parents, workers, administrators, ECE students) from 12 communities to assess current day care issues and develop strategies to continue advocacy for a comprehensive, high quality, non-profit child care system.

The opening key note speaker Friday evening was Laurel Rothman, past president of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC). She provided an overview of child care issues from a national and provincial perspective, as well as information about current activities of the Coalition in its attempts to influence child care policy.

On Saturday morning, a regional panel composed of Oni Kredl (Marathon), Rob Stinchcombe (Kaministiquia), Lynn Carlson (Dryden), Janet McCauley (Atikokan) and Anita Price (Thunder Bay) identified key concerns experienced in NW Ontario. These included: staff wages, fund raising problems faced by non profit Boards, accessibility, municipal discretion, inadequacy of guidelines for capital projects, insufficiency of capital funding, lack of standardization, inadequacy of subsidized spaces and northern funding inequities.

On Saturday afternoon, Margaret Phillips addressed the forum about the worsening situation in child care. She focused on our failure to obtain provincial policies sensitive to NW Ontario needs, the lack of administrative support for child care, and the cutbacks in training opportunities for northern communities that impact most negatively on the small, regional municipalities and Native communities. She stressed that child care advocates must continue their activism to resolve these problems.

Pay equity and the Coalition's U-Turn document were examined during two workshops Saturday morning.
The forum formally endorsed in principle the working document,"Child Care in Ontario: Making the Shift to the 1990's", and recommended the Coalition continue to encourage the Ontario government to implement the features of this program as quickly as possible.

The annual business meeting was conducted during the noon hour, at which time the 1991/92 representatives to the NWORDCC Council were chosen.

NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS = NEW CHILD CARE CENTRES

by Bobbi Tamblyn

In the last newsletter, I told you about the new Roman Catholic school in County Park in Thunder Bay which will have a child care facility included. Since then, I have taken on two new projects - the Lakehead Board and the Nipigon-Red Rock Board of Education.

The Lakehead Board is building in Slate River. The Slate/Blake project is the first rural project in Thunder Bay.
The Nipigon-Red Rock Board is building in Dorion. Both are targeted for a September 1992 opening. Slate/Blake has already broken ground; County Park is at the sketch plan stage; Dorion is in the initial drawing stage.

All of these projects are very exciting and each has its own unique qualities. The groups from all the Boards of Education are very progressive and enthusiastic. We are presently in need of a Board of Directors for each of the projects. Please call me, Bobbi, the Child Care Consultant, at (807) 625-1545 for further discussion and clarifications on any of these exciting new projects. I welcome any comments and suggestions.

Have a great summer!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS FOR BOARDS AND STAFF A PRIORITY

by Dianne Loucks
Child Care Community Development Consultant

By this time all programs in the District of Thunder Bay will have received a copy of up coming sessions for May and June, 1991. These sessions will be a primary focus for the 1991/92 year.

Some of the activities planned include: professional development sessions; developing AECEO membership in the region; development of program listings for the district; individual sessions with programs and boards; assisting new groups with needs assessments and proposals; producing a guideline paper for MCSS and the Minstry of Education.

I look forward to working with individuals and groups to raise the image of child care in our communities. By focusing on our similarities and the quality care of children, we will continue to build on a solid foundation.

Board and Staff Professional Development Sessions

OPEN TO ALL AREA CHILD CARE PROGRAMS (Sorry, travel is not subsidized).

Sessions will be held if there is sufficient registration. Please confirm your attendance by phone 622-0201. **Should numbers not be sufficient, the session will not be held.** Please check prior to the date.

FUND RAISING, PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT AND INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

1. May 23, 1991
   Manitouwadge, Township Office, 7-9pm.

2. May 30, 1991
   Thunder Bay, Brodie Resource Library, 7-9pm.

IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS AND MANAGING CONFLICT

1. June 18, 1991
   Geraldton, Geraldton Day Care Centre, 7-9 p.m.

2. June 24, 1991
   Thunder Bay, Waverley Resource Library, 7-9 p.m.

NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO REGIONAL DAY CARE COMMITTEE
COUNCIL MEMBERS 1991/92

Kenora Constituency

Lynn Carlson- Dryden
Lulubelle Kabestra- Whitefish Bay
Lucille Kelly- Nestor Falls
Julie Gauthier- Balmertown

Rainy River Constituency

Mary Ducharme- Fort Frances
Joanne Tremblay- Atikokan
Betty Anne West- Fort Frances

Lake Nipigon Constituency

Veronica Kreidl- Marathon
Nancy Proteau- Geraldton

Port Arthur Constituency

Anita Price- Thunder Bay
Sandra Snider- Thunder Bay
Rob Stinchcombe- Kaministiquia

Fort William Constituency

Fran Dalrymple- Thunder Bay
Lorrie LaDelle- Thunder Bay
Myrna Sawchuk- Thunder Bay

PROVINCIAL BUDGET- A DAY CARE OVERVIEW

Along with other activists the NWORDCC anxiously awaited the provincial budget that was announced April 29th. We view the budget with mixed reactions. We support the thrust of the budget policies developed. We are pleased with the initiatives that will impact positively in Northwestern Ontario such as support to Native communities, improved health transportation funding, and the initiatives that will support organizations working to end violence against women. However we are concerned by the absence from the budget of a demonstrated commitment to restructure child care in Ontario. We have written to Treasurer Floyd Laughren to express our concern and to urge the Ontario government to immediately begin the process to fundamentally restructure child care to ensure the development of the comprehensive, high-quality, non-profit child care system we need.

We recognize the constraints the provincial treasurer faced in developing the budget. Much of the deficit budgeted for is a direct result of federal government policies. $3.5 billion in lost revenue is due to cuts in transfer payments and the cap on the Canada Assistance Plan. Changes in unemployment insurance are forcing more and more of the unemployed onto welfare. Welfare costs are expected to reach $4.9 billion this year, up from $2.5 billion two years ago. An unemployment rate of 10 per cent, representing 184,000 jobs lost in the economy, is directly related to the free trade agreement, a high dollar and high interest rates.

The provincial budget held the line on child care with a $465 million commitment, up from $396 million in 1990. This figure includes the previously announced $30 million down payment on pay equity and the $22.8 million commited to bringing 5000 new spaces on line. The only new initiative directly mentioned in the budget is $5 million in capital funding for Native centres on reserves.

Other budget initiatives that may have an impact on child care include:

. a review of educational facilities towards a community-based, multi-use of schools is already underway. A $300 million capital fund for schools, beginning in 1994, will incorporate this approach.

. an additional $25 million has been earmarked for pay equity settlements for smaller agencies which could be of assistance to child care workers who are now excluded from the down payment.

. a $215 million package for welfare reform includes an expansion of the SEP program, part of which is earmarked for child care costs.

Recent correspondence from the Hon. Zanana Akande, Minister of Community and Social Services, informs us that the Ministry has initiated a "comprehensive review of the child care system with the goal to make it more accessible and affordable". The NWORDCC must analyze this review and continue to press for a fundamental restructuring of child care that will take into account the funding inequities experienced by northern child care, and ensure the comprehensive and equitable system that Ontario families need.

WELCOME

Kerry McCuaig as the new Executive Director of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care.

Barbara Lysnes as summer staff for the N.W.O.R.D.C.C. Margaret Phillips is taking a well-earned holiday.

ONTARIO COALITION FOR BETTER CHILD CARE LAUNCHES CHILD CARE NETWORK

The Coalition is offering membership in a network that will facilitate badly needed training, benefits, and accounting and administrative services to child care programs across the province. The Network is also designed to expand and strengthen the lobbying structure of the Coalition.

ANNUAL NETWORK MEMBERSHIP FEES

Child Care Centres	$125 plus $1 per licensed child care space
Private Home Day Care Agencies	$ 75 per agency plus $1 per home
Other unlicensed Child Care Related Programs	$ 50 per program

NETWORK SERVICES For more information contact the Coalition at (416) 324-9080

. representation at Coalition Council and Executive Table; advocacy on issues of interest to Network members.

. special training workshops on advocacy, board and staff development, general administration, program evaluation, multicultural and special needs programming; preferred registration in all educational events, conferences, seminars.

. access to the Coalition information and resource centre and consultation and referral services, including the video library; one free copy of all Coalition and Network publications.

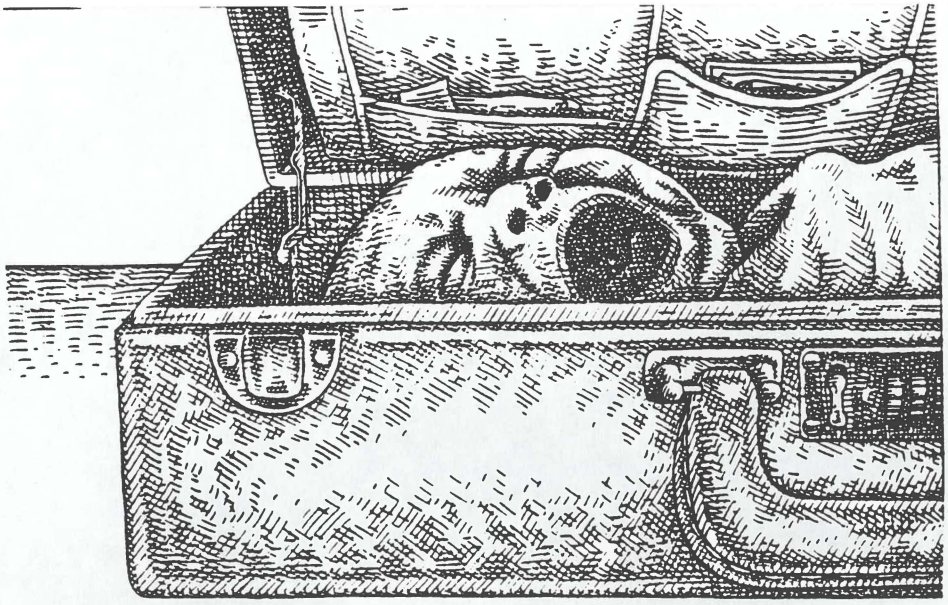
. participation in centrally administered staff insurance and benefits package; access to benefit levels and rates usually only available to very large employers.

. preferred rates on Coalition's computerized Financial Management Services package, and new computor software programs for day care.

Day care: Making a profit on baby?

Pay equity has added a new wrinkle to an old debate

By Julie Mathien



ALTHOUGH THE debate about the need for or desirability of child care has long since been resolved, the question of how it should be paid for is still lively, even rancorous.

In the main, there are two kinds of child care — profit and non-profit. These terms describe not just two sets of ledgers but two different understandings of the same important task.

Whether there should be profit in child care at all has been questioned repeatedly since the mid-1970s. That's when child care advocates noted how quickly large, commercial operators supported unsuccessful government attempts to reduce the standards regulating child care in Ontario.

Tensions since then between the commercial sector and non-profit advocates have focused on this question: Is it appropriate to provide public money to commercial child care?

Whether Conservative, Liberal or New Democrat, successive Ontario governments since the 1970s have provided money to encourage child care expansion. When the Conservative government made available capital and start-up funding, only non-profit and publicly operated centres were eligible. The Liberals differentiated between for-profit and non-profit programs in allocating grants to raise staff salaries.

The New Democrats continued this progression when they announced a "down payment" on pay equity for child care staff. Under this initiative, government funds will help child care programs with the cost of meeting the salary increases arising from the first step toward pay equity. The funds will be provided only to non-profit programs.

Governments, both past and present, have recognized the difference between for-profit and non-profit child care. In a commercial centre, individuals or corporations hold equity and earn profit. Non-profit centres are operated by boards of directors elected by the members. Surplus (an unlikely event, since non-profit budgets are calculated on a break-even basis) does not go out as profit, but must be put back into the child care program.

When resources are removed from a program in the form of profit, the impact is significant. Research has repeatedly shown that the for-profit sector is more likely to deliver poor quality care.

Child care centre owners have always protested what they perceive as the favored status of the non-profit sector. This time, both owners and staff in commercial centres have claimed that the government pay equity funding initiative discriminates against them.

The staff are right in one respect: As underpaid female workers in a ghettoized profession, they deserve equal pay for work of equal value. They have, however, chosen the wrong target for their dissatisfaction. The money for pay equity for staff in commercial day cares should not come from the public purse but from the profits of the owners — the employers.

Fees to parents in for-profit centres generally keep pace with those in non-profits even though staff salaries have traditionally been lower in commercial child care. The bulk of the profit is generated by this difference in salaries.

The prospect of providing pay equity adjustments to their employees has elicited the same response from child care owners that is heard from other businesses: They insist that pay equity is unaffordable. They threaten that centres will close and that children will suffer.

The owners have also made it clear that, if they do stay in business, they will raise parent fees to cover the cost of pay equity rather than dip into their profit margin.

How much of the cost of conducting business should government underwrite? As representatives of labor have pointed out, other employers, especially those operating small businesses, could make the same argument for public funds to implement pay equity. Child care is more complex than, say, ladies' clothing because there is a non-profit sector for comparison. The child care owners maintain that they should be able to compete with non-profit centres in the areas of staff salaries and fees to families. However, they don't want to spend their own funds to do this; they want to spend tax dollars.

PARTICULARLY during a recession, when revenue is down, government should not give funds to commercial child care to assist with pay equity. Funds for this purpose already exist in the form of profit. However, dealing with the entire situation is not simple. It involves more players than government and needs a more complicated response than a simple refusal.

Parents in for-profit programs may be panicked at threats of fee increases to cover the salary raises resulting from pay equity. They should support the child care staff in their legitimate desire for fair wages, funded by the owners' profits.

Commercial child care operators often maintain that they do not make a profit. If parents are convinced that this is the case in their child's centre, they might want to discuss with the owner the possibility that the best business option might be to convert to non-profit status.

As for staff in commercial centres, they deserve the same pay equity adjustments as their colleagues in the non-profit sector and should demand fair compensation from their employers.

The provincial government has both short- and long-term obligations. Owners of for-profit centres will need government information on how they can implement pay equity. In addition, the province must provide assistance in converting commercial centres to non-profit status when the owner wishes to do so or when the owner decides to shut down. Sound government direction can mean that centres will not close and child care spaces will not be lost.

Finally, government must start to change the child care system so that it becomes a public service rather than remaining simply another element in the marketplace.

☐ **Julie Mathien is a child care adviser with the Toronto Board of Education.**

TORONTO STAR