



CANADIAN
CHILD CARE
FEDERATION

FÉDÉRATION
CANADIENNE DES
SERVICES DE GARDE
À L'ENFANCE



CCAAC
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OPEN LETTER TO ALL CANADIAN PREMIERS ABOUT CANADA'S DIRE CHILD CARE SITUATION
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION
July 24-26 2013 Niagara-on-the-Lake Ontario

Dear Premiers:

We are writing to bring to your attention our urgent concern about Canada's child care situation. We urge you—as the leaders responsible for social programs—to use your annual meeting to commit to develop a collective strategy to resolve Canada's child care crisis.

Today most mothers of young children are in the labour force or in education and training. Furthermore, high quality early years experiences are well-recognized as key building blocks for lifelong learning and improved education outcomes for children. Both these drivers affect not only individual families but Canada's current and future prosperity and place in the world.

We recognize that a number of provinces/territories have taken efforts to address early childhood education and care issues—some quite significant. Nevertheless, Canada—both as a whole and regionally—has yet to adequately address the real needs of modern Canadian families. Canada as a whole has only enough regulated child care for about 20 per cent of 0-5 year olds. Furthermore, in almost all provinces/territories, child care fees are too costly for many Canadian families, contributing to unsustainable levels of household debt and financial insecurity.

At a minimum, we suggest that remedying Canada's child care situation requires developing a plan to ensure **all** families and children can access good quality programs that are regulated, monitored and supported by provincial/territorial governments.

In the last year, we have again and again been reminded about Canada's failure to meet the modern-day challenge of affordable, high quality child care. In the last few months, there has been public attention to a number of appalling incidents in which very young children have lost their lives in the unregulated, sometimes illegal child care operations upon which many (or most) Canadian families without access to regulated, affordable child care rely every day.

These deaths are only the tip of an unregulated child care iceberg that conceals makeshift, sometimes dangerous child care arrangements that are often families' sole options. Last spring, a CBC exposé graphically showed the sometimes shocking inadequacy of many unregulated child care arrangements. Indeed, it put on view not only inadequate unregulated legal situations (from the perspective of safety and child wellbeing) but blatantly illegal ones too. Neither of these can be described as good options.

In sum, in Canada we have for too long left too many families of young children in the tough position of having to make difficult decisions—decisions that we don't (and wouldn't) impose on families at the elementary or secondary school level. Today a great deal is known about both the importance of early childhood education and men and women who are parents being able to contribute to our economic prosperity and society. This knowledge should provide sufficient impetus to do better for our youngest citizens.

We are all aware that early childhood education and child care is first and foremost a responsibility of the provinces and territories. But like other social policy issues, it has significant and similar impacts on families in all regions of Canada. Clearly this is a critical issue that requires political leadership at the national level. For without a real system of early childhood education and child care, Canada will continue to fail its children and families—and thus ultimately the country.

With this in mind, we call upon all Premiers to:

- a) Use the opportunity of your 2013 annual meeting to commit to a collaborative approach and a concrete pan-Canadian strategy on early childhood education and child care that respects provincial jurisdiction but recognizes that children and families across Canada have more common and similar needs for high quality early childhood education and child care than differences;
- b) As part of this collaborative strategy, approach the Government of Canada, the Official Opposition, and other federal Opposition parties to invite them to play their appropriate financial and policy role(s) in ensuring that Canada's children and families are no longer short-changed.

We wish you a successful meeting in July 2013.

Yours truly,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Don Giesbrecht' and the signature on the right is 'Katie Arnup'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Don Giesbrecht
CEO
Canadian Child Care Federation

Katie Arnup
Board Member
Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada