

Kitchen Table Conversation Questions

Task Sheet



How have current or past problems finding child care affected you?

- How has the lack of affordable child care affected your family, your work, or your community?
- In general, how does the lack of affordable, quality child care affect Canadian women?
- Can we say that in 2013, child care is also a men's issue?
- Are the specific child care needs of Aboriginal, Francophone and immigrant children being met in this region? How about the needs of children with a disability, or children from a GLBT family?
- Why isn't child care seen as a collective problem, with a collective solution?
- What are the common threads that emerge from this discussion? What are the key issues?

Child Care in Canada: Overview

A Patchwork system

In Canada, there is no one, coherent child care system. In fact our system is so under-developed that we rank last on the child care index amongst the OECD countries.

Provinces and territories are primarily responsible for early childhood education and care services. This covers child care, nursery schools and kindergarten, school, after hours school care, etc. Some funding is provided by the federal government, but since the Conservative government was elected, funding for the development of a Pan-Canadian child care system has dwindled. The women's movement and labour have been pushing for more federal funding to support the development of a universal, quality child care system for the last 30 years.

Each province and territory has its own child care regulations. They set staff- to-child ratios, maximum group size, training requirements, physical environments and other program conditions. Regulated child care can include: non-profit community run child care centers, public child care offered by municipalities; commercial child care centres, and home-based child care. Nursery schools and kindergarten's also

fall under provincial responsibility, and are regulated by public authorities.

Most child care is delivered by municipal or parent-controlled non-profit child care centres. However, 25 per cent of child care centre-based spaces were for-profit in 2008. Nationally, the proportion of for-profit centres, which had declined for a decade, began increasing again in 2006. Most provinces and territories now require at least some of the staff to have Early Childhood Education (ECE) training, but Canadian requirements for early childhood training are acknowledged to be less than adequate.

Quality child care is in short supply in Canada. Less than one out of every four children has access to regulated childcare.

Ready access to publicly-delivered child care is found only in Quebec – where 70 per cent of children under five can access a child care space. Québec is also the province where the child care costs to parents are the lowest: parents pay \$7 a day per child. Across the rest of the country, provision of child care services is uneven, sometimes inadequate and usually very expensive. Outside of Québec, less than 20% of all child care spaces are publicly regulated.

A system that is directly funded by parents

Canadian child care is funded mostly through parent fees (except in Quebec). Subsidies cover some or all of the costs in regulated child care for those parents who can secure one. But fee subsidies are targeted to very low-income parents, and there are long waiting lists for subsidized spaces. Many middle-class families are simply not able to afford regulated child care.

Canada is lagging behind other countries

Canada is one of only a few industrialized countries without a coherent and effective early childhood education and child care system. In many countries, governments have concluded that both are necessary and desirable – good for children, women, families, the economy and society. They have put public resources into building widely accessible and high-quality early childhood education and child care programs.

Providing universal quality, low cost public childcare can be done in Canada. Indeed, Québec has been doing it since 1998. The information Sheet “*The Québec child care system*” has more detailed information.

And Sweden is doing it even better: their child care system is fully funded by the

national government, and delivered by municipalities. Eighty-five per cent (85%) of two and three year-old children are enrolled in child care programs, as are 46 per cent of babies who one year old. But thanks to generous parental leave, in 2005 there were only 30 infants under one year in child care.

In a 2008 report, UNICEF ranked Canada last out of 25 countries, because we had failed to meet nine out of ten of UNICEF’s benchmark indicators of quality and access to early childhood education and child care.

The Conservative government does not support child care

The Conservative government abolished the federal-provincial-territorial funding agreements on child care in 2006. It replaced the development of a public child care system with cash payments directly to parents (\$100 a month for each child under 6). This just covers a Saturday night babysitter

The Conservative government is neglecting child care because it actually wants more women to stay at home and take care of the kids. They call this “free choice in child care”. But staying at home rarely increases women’s choices in life. On the contrary, it has been proven that for every year a woman stays home to take care of the kids, she

loses five per cent of her earning capacity for the rest of her life. Ten years means a loss of 30 per cent in pay and benefits. Mothers pay a high price for taking care of the human race.

Quality child care promotes children's human rights

The United Nations actually considers that access to child care is a human rights issue, because quality child care helps promote children's physical and mental health, emotional security, cultural and personal identity, and developing competencies. It is linked to children's right to education and to maximum development. In 2005, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child urged governments to develop "comprehensive strategic and time-bound plans" and to increase the budget allocations for child care services.

...and promotes women's equality

The UN also considers that child care is crucial for ensuring women's equality. In 2008, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) urged Canada to provide more child care spaces, with a particular attention to the needs of low-income women, and Aboriginal women. It recommended that Canada do a cost analysis to assess the impact of the

current lack of child care services on women.

Decent jobs for women

Publicly funded childcare is also good for workers. Most early child care educators in Canada are women. Not surprisingly, this is one of the lowest paid of all professions in the country. The median average full-time, full-year income for early childhood educators in 2006 was only \$25,100. The public funding of child care services allows for child care unions to be organized and collective bargaining to be done at a central table. In Québec, this resulted in 35 per cent pay increases, access to a pension fund on retirement, and pay equity adjustments to their salaries of nine per cent.

Let's rethink child care!

As the fourth wealthiest country in the world, there is no reason that Canada can't do better to provide for the needs of its children, women and families. This country has the capacity. What's lacking is the political will to make the changes – everyone who cares for the quality of life that children have in Canada should be an advocate for child care.

The PSAC is working with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and other unions, and with the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, and



Child Care Kitchen Table Conversations: Starting a Campaign with Our Stories Workshop

HANDOUT # 2

other child care advocates to make child care an election issue in 2015.

Together, let's rethink child care

The Québec Child Care System

Since the 1960s, childcare has been a key priority of the women's movement in Québec. In 1969, the Front de liberation des femmes (Women's liberation Front) demanded publicly funded childcare, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

Women's groups and trade unions, as well as child care workers and parents worked together to educate the public. After pressuring the provincial government for over 40 years, publically funded childcare was implemented. This program is arguably the best child care system in North America.

A Forty-Year Battle

The first inter-ministerial committee to study childcare was formed by the Québec government in 1971. "Plan Bacon" followed in 1974 with a \$2 subsidy per child care space and the creation of the "Office des service de garde" – a childcare bureau.

Child care advocates, like many other Quebeckers believed strongly that citizens must be directly involved in the development and control of services. This lead to the development of a network of "garderies populaires" (community childcare centres),

community health care clinics, legal aid clinics, food coops, etc.

In the 1980's, many childcare centers were organized by the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, with a few other centres going to the CEQ teachers union, and to the FTQ. As of 1982 the unions pushed to collectively bargain their wages at a central table. They waged an intensive pressure campaign between 1992 and 1994 against the low wages of childcare workers, including 2 one day strikes. In 1994, the government began subsidizing the salaries of child care providers.

A Comprehensive Family Policy in 1997

Throughout the 80's and the 90's, childcare remained a priority demand of the Union movement. After much consultation and input, the first comprehensive family policy was adopted in 1997, entitled "*Les Enfants au cœur de nos choix: les nouvelles dispositions de la politique familiale*".

This policy mandated:

- a family benefit (universal, but adapted to family income and number of children)
- affordable early learning and child care services

- more generous parental leave benefits

The Rapid Expansion of Public Child Care Centres

The policy has been hugely successful. In 1998, there were 73,000 subsidized child care spaces in Québec, 160,000 new spaces have been created since. Seven out of 10 children under the age of five now have access to government child care in Québec.

When the policy was first introduced, parents paid \$5 a day per child. Today, parents pay \$7 a day. All other costs are subsidized by the Québec government subsidizes the rest of the costs. The types of childcare available through the government program include: private and public child care centers, home daycares, early kindergarten and after school services.

The main feature of this policy is the creation of a provincial network of “Centres de la petite enfance”, non-profit childcare centers referred to as “CPE”. They were built on the existing network of non-profit, parent supported child care center. These centers comprise the majority of existing child care services in Québec. And they are still controlled by a Board of parents and workers.

New early kindergarten programs for 4 year old children have been developed, and they have proven to be particularly helpful for children from disadvantaged families, recent immigrant or refugees and for children with a disability. In addition, after school childcare programs were implemented everywhere for children up to 12 years old - essential services for working parents.

Today

67.3% of childcare needs are now met by the Québec public system, compared to less than 20% for the rest of Canada.

In addition, the Marois government has promised to create 28,000 new child care spaces. Her government will only fund the development of nonprofit child care centers. However, to fund this reform, she has cut the CPE budgets, spurring a wave of discontent. Many are now suggesting that instead of cutting the CPE budgets, the government should increase the cost to \$8 a day.

The Benefits of Child Care

It is clear that the Québec policy has led to a system that is greatly appreciated by women, parents, and children!

- More women are working
In the last 15 years, there were 250,000 women joined the Québec workforce. ,

HANDOUT # 3

The proportion of women with post-secondary education has also increased significantly.

A comprehensive study indicated that, in the 2008 calendar year, 41,700 mothers of a child under 5, and an additional 28,000 women with school aged children were working because they now had access to affordable child care. During this same year, the number of single mothers on social assistance declined from 30% in 1991, to 12% in 2011.

- Québec is a more prosperous society

Thanks to the influx of women in the labour market in 2008, the Québec gross domestic product increased by 5 billion dollars despite the fact that most of those women earn less than 40,000\$ a year.

The bottom line -- childcare is good for the economy! While Québec spent 1.6 billion on childcare in 2008, the government received 2.4 billion back in taxes -- 1.7 million stayed in the province, and 700 million went to Ottawa as federal income tax.

- Decent working conditions for child care workers

Public funding of child care also benefits child care providers. In 1998, recognition to bargain collectively was

achieved. In 1999, child care providers achieved the following:

- a 35% pay increase, over four years;
- a commitment to hold a national pension forum; and
- the creation of a pay equity working group to undertake a pay equity analysis of their work.

- Pay Equity for child care workers

In 2006 the workers negotiated a pay equity readjustment for 25,000 full-time and 10,000 part-time CPE workers. The early learning and care educators, as well as assistants and cooks received 9% pay increases. A 105 million dollar commitment by the Québec government.

- Less child poverty

Quality child care is good for the children. Québec's child poverty has decreased by over 50%. Children's test scores have also significantly improved.

PSAC Works for Childcare

PSAC Works for you

Since 1980, the PSAC has been working hard to help working women and their families deal with the specific challenges around childcare and work-life balance issues.

Adoption leave, maternity leave allowance, parental leave, care and nurturing leave, and family related leave were won after the courageous strike by the CR workers in 1980. The leverage from the strike allowed us to get a comprehensive family leave package with 93% of salary paid for maternity leave; up to 5 years of leave without pay for the care and nurturing of preschool children; time off when children are sick, etc. This became the model for other PSAC members and the broader public service including the armed forces and the RCMP.

The PSAC was also one of the first unions to bargain for the recognition of spousal and family benefits for lesbians and gays, and their families.

In 1989, the PSAC obtained a commitment from Treasury Board on Work Place Child care in the Federal Public Service, and in 1991, the Workplace Day Care Centres policy was approved. Since then, more than a dozen workplace child care centers have been providing important support for PSAC members and their children.

PSAC continues to do cutting edge work to defend our members: we are currently fighting to have custom adoption for our Aboriginal members included in our collective agreements.

Recently, we won a precedent setting family status accommodation case in the courts. Fiona Johnstone took the CBSA to court, because the employer refused to accommodate her requests for a reasonable work schedule, that would allow her to make childcare arrangements. And with PSAC support, she won setting a precedent that will help women and families in many other workplaces better balance their child

HANDOUT # 4

care responsibilities with their work. Employers must now consider requests for accommodation for childcare.

In 2012, the delegates at the PSAC National Convention unanimously adopted a resolution making childcare a national priority for our union. We are now engaged in a pan-Canadian three year campaign with the CLC and other trade unions. The theme of this campaign is “We are ALL Affected by the lack of quality child care. Let’s Rethink Child Care!

The first phase of this campaign is a series of local Kitchen Table Conversations on child care. This campaign seeks to make child care a critical issue for the next federal elections. We will also be lobbying provincial and federal governments in coalition with other unions and child care advocates, for a national system of quality childcare. The PSAC is working with our members to defend their rights at work and in society!

Your dues are working for you

Be proud of your union!

We are ALL affected by the lack of quality affordable child care services: Let's Rethink Child Care!

PSAC Child care Campaign

Achieving a national childcare program has been a longstanding demand for the PSAC. In the last 3 years, PSAC members have strategized and built significant organizational capacity on childcare issues. The 2010 National Women's Conference adopted an extensive Women's Action Plan, where childcare was a central issue. The 2012 PSAC Triennial Convention unanimously adopted a resolution calling on the PSAC to prioritize the organization of political action, forums and campaign to promote a pan-Canadian childcare system.

Following the adoption of this resolution, the Women's Program Officer has developed a pan-Canadian, three year child care campaign proposal in collaboration with the CLC and a few key affiliates (CUPE, CUPW, and the CAW). This plan was discussed by the Women's Working Group of the PSAC National Human Rights Committee in December. A detailed summary of the proposed campaign was submitted to the AEC in April 2013, and approved.

The theme of this campaign is: ***We are ALL affected by the lack of quality affordable child care services: Let's Rethink Child Care!*** The campaign is designed to shape public opinion on childcare, engage PSAC members in a sustained campaign, and make childcare an election issue. It will have three distinct phases.

- **Examining the realities of childcare:** local meetings will take place at or near the workplace to discuss our members' experiences with childcare and to recruit and organize networks of members to work on the issue.
- **Exploring the alternatives:** PSAC members, members of other unions and community child care advocates will come together to discuss what it takes to ensure that a child care system works for everyone in all types of communities across the country.

- **Taking action:** this phase will focus on engaging and mobilizing Canadians to make child care a vote-determining issue in the federal election.

Phase One of the campaign, the organization of “Kitchen Table Conversations” on child care is starting to take shape. A “Kitchen Table Conversation Guide” has been developed in collaboration with other affiliates, as well as 2 videos and a few information sheets, all available in English and in French on the new website that was created for this campaign: www.rethinkchildcare.ca . A postcard is also available for this campaign. We have also developed a specific one page sheet entitled: PSAC *“Works for Child care, PSAC Works for you!”* that is attached.

The goal at this phase of the campaign is to organize at least several local meetings in the 17 Components, in each of the 7 regions in 2013 and 2014.



Too many families are struggling to find child care.

Others worry about the quality of care they have.

Most of us are left patching together child care we can afford.

Rethink Child Care Join the campaign...

"If you want to have kids, and if you want to have a job you need to have child care."

– "Let's Rethink Child Care" video

Finding affordable quality child care is a huge challenge for parents. Child care wait lists are notoriously long and 78 per cent of Canadian children under the age of six don't have access to regulated child care.

The cost of child care is growing. The average cost per child is \$30-\$80 a day, or over \$1,000 a month per child.

In Quebec, regulated child care spaces are just seven dollars a day. We want to have affordable and accessible child care services all across Canada.

A coalition of Canadian unions and child care advocates is launching a new campaign that will make sure public and non-profit child care is a priority in the 2015 federal election.

This campaign is designed to engage all Canadians - parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends and co-workers - in conversations about the difficulty of finding affordable child care.

It features a short video, accompanied by interactive "kitchen table" conversations which provide an informal space to talk about personal experiences with child care.

You can join the campaign at RETHINKCHILDCARE.CA.





DATE:

Whether you are a parent, grandparent, friend, aunt or uncle, come share your stories and learn about PSAC's campaign to make child care services a priority for governments.

TIME:

For more info and if you need child care to participate please contact:

LOCATION:

Think child care is just your problem?
Think again!



Public Service Alliance of Canada
Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada