

June 2008

NATIONAL CHILD CARE WORKING GROUP Report to the National Executive Board

Advocacy

CUPE continues to be active in Code Blue. Deborah Brennan had a very successful two-week cross-Canada speaking tour to share the lessons about corporate control of child care. Brennan, a professor of Social Policy at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, has published widely on child care policy. CUPE was a major contributor of resources and organization to make this tour a success.

A joint special session was organized for the National Women's Committee and the National Child Care Working Group during the joint National Committees meetings in April. There were discussions by all members based on presentations by Deborah Brennan and Lynell Anderson from the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC).

CUPE released a legal opinion warning of the trade dangers inherent with the foreign investment by big-box child care. The opinion received media coverage and is a useful tool for CUPE and its coalition partners.

The CCAAC has been able to continue, thanks to the contributions of labour unions including CUPE. However, they have been forced to close their office and have been reduced to one full-time position, shared between two people. They will not be working throughout the summer. Despite all the dedication and work done by Code Blue and the CCAAC, we have reached a crossroad in advocacy after the cuts by the Conservative government and their refusal to budge on the issue of a public national child care. Advocates will gather in Ottawa this September, to map out a plan of action to carry the issue forward throughout the election. CCAAC and Code Blue will continue to need assistance from CUPE and other labour unions to keep the issue of universal child care in the front of Canadians' minds as we head into an election.

Child care is a foundational component of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) Women's Economic Equality Campaign. CUPE has contributed three book-offs of our members in three areas identified by the Congress: Charlottetown, Halifax and Toronto. Announcements should be made shortly about the activities and events planned for June in communities across Canada. Keep up-to-date through their website http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/womens_economic_equa.

Privatization Campaign

Child Care has emerged as an important privatization issue in addition to its importance as a social program and part of the vision of public services and strong communities. The lessons learned through the multi-national ABC Learning Centres show that child

care is just as vulnerable as water, transit, health and education to be eroded as a social program and transformed to a commodity traded on the stock exchange.

ABC Learning Centres provide an example of the worst of what can happen when social programs are delivered through a market model. However, there are more insidious forms of privatization of child care. The fundamental flaw with child care delivery is that outside of Québec is based purely on a market model that includes non-profit and for-profit delivery. As with other privatization threats government points to regulation as the solution to the threat but the evidence shows otherwise-regulation will never create or protect a quality social program. The threat of privatization of child care is still not well understood by CUPE members, the public, the media and governments. The National Child Care Working Group believes that child care is an important issue to be one of the key pieces of CUPE's privatization campaign.

The Working Group has started to develop some ideas but wants to flesh out a full plan. Here are some of the elements we discussed:

- Developing a workshop on lessons from Australia on privatization
- Designing a media presentation at division conventions for 2009 along the lines of the domino presentation developed this year
- Creating new stickers and buttons on the issue
- Planning a tour around funding for a public non-profit system with our coalition partners perhaps culminating in a day of action

Joint meeting of CUPE National Committees

The Working Group has a list of potential collaborations with other committees based on the discussions between committees at the joint meeting. The Working Group appreciated the opportunity to have these discussions and looks forward to working on issues with other committees.

Child Care at CUPE functions

The National Child Care Working Group is developing a draft policy, for consideration by CUPE, on child care and dependent care at conventions and conferences. This initiative is also part of the recommendations from the Women's Task Force.

We have also started to develop a manual of procedures to follow when child care is provided on site. Often, there are issues around how child care is handled at CUPE functions. The National Child Care Working Group believes this is because planning event child care is different and requires planning that requires experience in this field.

Respectfully submitted by Margot Young, Staff Advisor, NCCWG
On behalf of Jamie Kass, Co-chair; Michael Hurley, NEB Liaison