Northwestern Ontario Day Care News

OCTOBER 1987

NWO 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's happening on the federal and provincial scenes, both in terms of governmental policy/legislation and advocacy groups' activities.

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 our region.

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

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

The NWO Regional Day Care Committee is back in business. Not that we were ever out of business, but our volunteers did get pretty stretched over the summer. Happily, we've received funding from the Department of Secretary of State (September 1987 - February 1988) and Margaret has been hired (three days per week) to facilitate the Committee's work.

The Steering Committee had a very productive meeting on September 19th establishing plans and priorities for the next six months. It was decided to hold the Regional Forum in February (rather than this fall). Thinking optimistically, by February we expect finalized information about the Ministry's plans to implement their new policy, and hopefully we can then start to PLAN rather than just deal with crisis.

Political action taken by the Committee included sending letters and information packages to all Northwestern Ontario MPPs, and communicating to the Honourable John Sweeney, Minister of Community and Social Services, our concerns for comprehensive services and flexibility; wages; 100% capital funding; as well as emphasizing Northwestern Ontario priorities and differences.

Issues of concern raised by Steering Committee representatives included enrolment based fees; infant care; and after-school programs. Capital funding is also an issue as several centres are in dire need of new facilities, and the existing formula of 50% capital contributions is clearly inadequate.

Utilizing "technology" to enhance regular communications amongst Northwestern Ontario day care people will be investigated, including the possibility of teleconferencing and computer networking.

Municipal day care representatives expressed interest in obtaining information concerning Pay Equity legislation and decided to invite someone with expertise in this field to attend a future meeting.

At our next meeting, the Steering Committee will develop (for presentation to the February Forum) models for organizational structure and ongoing funding to ensure a regional organization is maintained.

Considering the need to ensure regional communication (given the decision to postpone the Forum until February), it was agreed to invite representatives from Sioux Lookout, Dryden and Longlac to the next Steering Committee meeting to be held in Thunder Bay, Saturday, November 28, 1987.

REGIONAL NEWS

FORT FRANCES

Submitted by Phyllis Kellar:

The Fort Frances Day Care And Child Development Centre and Fort Frances Private Home Day Care Centre program entered a float in the July 1st parade. The children were dressed up in community helper outfits with box town props with a banner - CARE FOR OUR CHILDREN, THEY ARE OUR FUTURE. The Day Care and Private Home Day Care programs in Fort Frances are full to capacity, with a long waiting list. The Day Care Centre has been informed that their lease will not be renewed on May 31, 1988, so we are presently exploring all avenues and looking for a new facility. We did a fundraising of selling cook books and have almost sold 200 books. We also had a penny fair that all the Day Care children enjoyed.

MARATHON

Submitted by Naomi Vodden:

Marathon Day Care has been very busy; our enrolment is growing steadily. We have increased our number of subsidized spaces and changed maximums which allows more families to qualify for subsidies.

We have been attempting to increase public awareness - letters have been sent to major Marathon companies asking for support. After much work, we have received our registered charitable number which hopefully will bring more money our way.

The big excitement is the $11,000 grant we received from the Ministry of Northern Development. [Editor's Note: The story of this grant is most interesting ... do ask the Marathon people for details.]

Our Open House was well attended and provided an opportunity to discuss the Ontario day care situation and the commercial issue. The forum report was published in our monthly newsletter and election issues discussed with parents.

The Day Care participated in the festival of social services, and had a chance to talk to MPP Gilles Pouliot at this event.

Provision of day care space in one (or more) of the new schools being planned for Marathon is being pursued.

[Editor's Note: We are sorry to learn that Naomi Vodden is leaving Marathon because of her husband's transfer. We all wish Naomi well and we're sure she'll organize a day care advocacy group in Kirkland Lake. Veronica Kriedl will replace Naomi on the Steering Committee. Welcome, Veronica!]

DRYDEN

Submitted by Karen Warbin:

Our children have enjoyed many special events including a Family Picnic sponsored by our Parents' Group and a visit to the Game Farm which allowed children to experience animals they had never seen before. A picnic with the Patricia Gardens Seniors was enjoyed by all, as was the Fall Fair Parade. Thirty-five children participated in our Summer Olympics. Recently our Fire Chief conducted an educational program geared to pre-schoolers. The children learned "Stop, Drop and Roll".

Our 4th Annual Day Care Open House was most successful with thirty-five parents and two Town Councillors attending.

The waiting list continues to grow (18 in September). A survey is being conducted to help evaluate the situation.

[Editor's Note: Karen Warbin, who has been Acting Supervisor for some months, was appointed Supervisor, October 1st. All our best wishes, Karen!]

GERALDTON

Submitted by Diane Sarrazin:

In conjunction with the Town's 50th Anniversary, our Centre hosted two Open House Days, July 30th and 31st. On Saturday, August 1st, children and staff were involved in our float, "Old Woman in the Shoe" in the anniversary parade. A booth was also featured in

our Annual District Fall Fair (August 21st and 22nd).

The Parent Committee has been actively involved in a post card campaign, as well as attending election meetings in the area.

Geraldton has a waiting list of 21. Consideration is being given to holding the latch-key program off-site. The need for infant care has been identified.

On October 26, 1986, the Geraldton Day Care Centre will celebrate its 15th anniversary.

Councillor Sally Laine, who is a member of the Geraldton Town Council, has been appointed to an Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) Task Force on Child Care to represent Northwestern Ontario.

RED LAKE

Submitted by Holly Rupert.

The Red Lake Centre has a waiting list; however Balmertown has experienced a decline in enrolment since the introduction of Junior Kindergarten. The Balmertown facility is not well designed for toddlers. A new school is planned for Balmertown but, as yet, no decision has been made about locating the day care centre within the new school.

ONTARIO COALITION CONFERENCE

It is expected that we will have a strong Northwestern Ontario delegation attend the Fifth Annual Ontario Coalition for Better Day Care Conference and Lobby in Toronto, November 6-9, 1987.

With the optimistic theme "The-Times-They-Are-a-Changing" - New Models for Child Care Services and Strategies for Implementation, the conference has an impressive program. Holly Rupert (Red Lake) will be our representative on the opening panel, reporting on regional activities and concerns. Sylvia Gold, President of the Canadian Advisory Council on Women's Issues, will address the conference on 'Federal Priorities for Child Care'. A panel of experts will discuss the "commercial issue".

There is a total of thirty workshops from which to choose that will appeal to diverse interests that workers, parents, administrators and advocates may have. Workshops that will be of particular interest to Northwestern Ontario delegates include:

- New Directions for Child Care: The Government's View. Kay Eastham, Director, Child Care Branch, will outline the new government policy and explain the process of implementation.

- The Direct Operating Grant - How It Will Work, How It Will Affect Staff, Parents and Children.

- The Transitional Grants - What They Are and What Will Happen to Them [our emphasis].

- Changing to Income Testing - How It Will Work.

- Flexible Models of Child Care;
- Barriers to Development of Non-Profit Day Care Programs and Strategies for Change; Pay Equity Legislation;
- Bargaining for Better Day Care;
- School-Age Day Care - and many more.

Sunday's program includes a session on the constitution (Meech Lake Accord) and implications for day care; a session on legal issues in child care; and preparation for Monday's lobby.

As well, NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO DELEGATES WILL MEET SUNDAY (exact time and room to be announced). This meeting will give us the opportunity to analyze the information we obtain at Saturday's sessions; determine whether there is need for NWO political action; and decide on methods of transferring our newly-acquired knowledge to the rest of the Northwestern Ontario day care community.

CONTINUED ...

To make the most effective use of the limited budget funds available, all interested delegates are asked to explore possibilities of getting full or partial sponsorship from their centre/union or community sources. For delegates unable to acquire local sponsorship, the following subsidies will be available: (1) Travel subsidy from the Ontario Coalition for Better Day Care, and (2) the Northwestern Ontario Regional Day Care Committee will pay your registration fees. Delegates will be responsible for their own accommodation. Billeting can be arranged by contacting the Coalition. All NWO people planning to attend the Coalition Conference are asked to advise Margaret as soon as possible (623-9067).

NATIONAL DAY CARE CONFERENCE

The Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association will host a major national conference in Ottawa, April 21-24, 1988.

CHILD CARE: MEET THE CHALLENGE will feature major speakers and workshops on the expected new federal child care initiatives, service delivery developments in the provinces/territories, and recent child care research. Skill building and strategy sessions will help conference participants to take an active role in shaping future public policy.

It is important that Northwestern Ontario be represented at this national conference. As the CDCAA has limited resources for subsidies, we should attempt to get community support to send our delegates. The conference is only six months away, so let's start planning now.

COMSOC FUNDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Reported by Margaret Phillips:

I have been appointed to represent Northwestern Ontario on the Funding Advisory Committee which was recently established by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The objective of the Committee is "to provide a vehicle for consultation on the introduction of direct funding to licensed child care programs and on the change from needs-testing to income-testing for subsidies". The Committee is composed of day care providers, advocates, administrators and Ministry representatives.

The first area to be addressed is the implementation of the direct grant to non-profit centres, which is to be implemented this fiscal year, that is, before March 31, 1988. The change from needs testing to income testing is scheduled for implementation during the next fiscal year, that is, before March 31, 1989.

In order to acquire the necessary information base from which to develop long range planning, as well as to monitor the impact of direct grants and income-testing policy, the Ministry will be conducting a number of surveys, at least one of which will be sent to every licensed program in the province. (In view of the fact that NWO municipal centres have just undergone a comprehensive review, it has been recommended that further surveys of municipal day care be kept to a minimum.)

While I understand the Ministry's need to develop a data base which is essential for proper long range planning, I expect that acquiring this information will be time-consuming and could cause policy implementation delays that will prove frustrating to Northwestern Ontario centres.

Northwestern Ontario representation on this Committee is important as it is apparent that although we share common goals across the province our priorities differ. For example, reducing parent fees, which remains NWO's top priority, is of lesser concern to southern representatives who have increasing staff wages as their key priority. Transitional grants to municipal centres is primarily (although not exclusively) a northern issue. It is clear that the transitional grant program must be viewed separate and apart from the new direct grant program.

Clearly, the implementation of direct grants will be welcomed by our non-profit centres (although efforts to improve the

amount of the grant must continue). At this point, it is uncertain what the direct grant will mean for Indian Band centres but, hopefully, this will be clarified in future meetings. The transitional grant to municipal centres is, of course, a separate issue.

I will try to keep you informed about the work of the Funding Advisory Committee through this newsletter and/or special memos to centre supervisors. I would sincerely welcome your feedback and suggestions of areas of concern that I should be raising at this Committee.

POLL: MAJORITY SUPPORT CHILD CARE

[Reprinted from the Day Care Advocate]

Close to 2/3 of Canadians support government funding of day care according to a poll by Angus Reid Associates. The questions on day care were part of a major public opinion survey of women's and family issues commissioned by Southam News and conducted between January 10-13, 1987.

Sixty per cent of men and 66% of women agreed that "governments should provide funding to ensure that everyone who wishes to use quality day care can do so".

Although the poll found little difference between women and men on issues involving women and the family, it did indicate a generation gap. Seventy-nine per cent of respondents between 18 and 34 years support more public funding of child care. Among those aged 35 to 54, 60% want more funding, while for those 55 and over, the figure is 43%.

GOOD NEWS!

Day care is expanding in Northwestern Ontario.

- Little Lions Day Care (Thunder Bay) has expanded to a full day care program with 32 spaces. Little Lions previously operated a nursery school program for 16 children.

- Central Day Care is a new centre in Thunder Bay with 39 licensed spaces.

- Lakehead University, after many years of effort by many people, will soon have day care on campus. The LU Day Care Committee hopes to open their Nanibijou Day Care Centre in early January.

- Plans are progressing well for the Red Rock Day Care Centre, who look forward to opening their Centre in early 1988.

- Confederation College continues to expand day care services and are in the early planning stages for their Hub Model.

These recent developments are certainly encouraging — we hope they are just the beginning of a trend.





Monday, October 26, 1987

"Absolute deadline" promised by Epp only weeks away

Child-care plan still in need of approval

OTTAWA (CP) — After months of delay, the federal government's proposed child-care system still hasn't received cabinet approval even though the "absolute deadline" promised by the health minister is only weeks away.



JAKE EPP
..."studying how to present plan"

Health Minister Jake Epp said in June the "absolute deadline is finalization at the first ministers' conference."

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the premiers are to meet Nov. 26-27 in Toronto. Epp will only say the government is studying the best way to present its child-care proposal.

"We want to do it in the spirit of Meech Lake," he said in an interview last week. But he declined to explain further.

A federal-provincial agreement has already missed several deadlines.

Originally, Ottawa and the provinces were to have come to terms by the end of June. Then Epp said just the federal proposal would be ready by the end of June.

After the Meech Lake constitutional accord began eating into cabinet's time, Epp said the proposal would be ready in the fall.

Now, delay is blamed on a free-trade pact with the United States which has dominated cabinet meetings.

"There clearly hasn't been enough time for the ministers to finish the thing off but that's not to say it's not an active issue, because it is," said John Soar, assistant deputy health minister in charge of social services.

GIVEN TO PROVINCES

Once cabinet approves the proposal, it goes to provincial social services ministers for study before the plan is made public.

Lynn Westlake, co-ordinator of the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association, said she fears that Finance Department officials are holding up the process with concerns about costs.

Westlake met finance officials last spring and said they worried the costs of a child-care system would keep rising unless a limit were set.

Susan Peterson, director of social policy in the Finance Department, would not comment on the idea of a limited fund.

But Soar said problems between the Health and Finance departments have been resolved.

Westlake fears "all the compromising since then has been done by Health and Welfare, not by Finance."

But Finance and at least five other departments with an interest in a child-care system — Treasury Board, Status of Women, Employment and Immigration, Indian Affairs and the Federal-Provincial Relations Office of the Privy Council — are still studying the proposal, Soar said.

"There are some complexities that have to be resolved," he said.

Soar said the proposal could still clear all necessary channels before the November conference but things may have to be speeded up.