

Coalition calls for investment in child care and women's equality in federal budget

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8, 2011

OTTAWA – The Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights is calling on the federal government to take women into account in its upcoming federal budget. The call for action comes on the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day and follows the release of a report by the YWCA Canada calling for a national child care program.

The YWCA's report concludes that a national child care plan is "a crucial support for children and parents and should become as normalized in our social structure as the public school system as a choice for parents." The Ad Hoc Coalition says that a national public child care system is the best way to deliver that choice.

"We need more money for child care. A national child care program is crucial to achieving true gender equality. This government's focus on corporate tax cuts will drain precious resources from programs and policies that could actually help reduce the equality gap for women in this country," said Ad Hoc Coalition member Maureen Morrison, who heads the Equality Branch of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

"Approximately 40 per cent of women are so poor that they pay no income tax, so tax cuts don't benefit them at all," says Ad Hoc Coalition member Brenda Wallace, President of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW). "We want to see a federal budget that actually takes women's needs into account and that gives us our share of the public resources."

Dedicated funding for a pan-Canadian child care system would make a huge difference in the lives of women, their children and their families. In most regions and provinces except Quebec, child care remains expensive, inaccessible and unregulated.

According to comparative reports by the OECD, UNICEF, and UNESCO, Canada is one of the lowest spenders on child, family and health expenditure and a laggard on child care. In UNICEF's 2008 ECEC report card, Canada was at the bottom of 25 countries on quality, access and public spending.

"Federal funding would help develop much-needed child care and early education. It would also create jobs for women, and would benefit the economy," says Ad Hoc Coalition member Sue Delanoy, spokesperson for the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC). "Recent research shows that every dollar invested in a child care program increases the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) by \$2.30, far ahead of stimulus from construction and manufacturing."

The Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights is comprised of 35 women's groups, unions, and human rights organizations that advocate for gender equality and human rights in Canada.

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