

**UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT BY EXPLORING THE PAST: AN  
ANALYSIS OF FAMILY ALLOWANCE AND CHILD CARE IN CANADA**

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## ABSTRACT

Unlike many European nations, Canada has no coherent child care policy framework designed to meet the needs of families and to facilitate the healthy development of young children. In this thesis, the author proposes that the origins of this policy gap lie in the stance adopted by policymakers during the post-World War II era of the burgeoning Canadian welfare state. Although much has been written on the 1945 introduction of Canada's first universal social security measure, the family allowance program, there is a scarcity of literature regarding the relationship between this program and the contemporary paucity of regulated child care services in Canada. Informed by conflict theory, the author cites historical evidence, derived from both primary and secondary sources, to substantiate the argument that the current underdevelopment of child care services in Canada is related to the introduction of the family allowance program. The thesis has a contemporary focus as well, as the author provides an overview of the child care regimes found in Sweden and France, both of which are much more comprehensive than Canada's. The thesis concludes with a consideration of how conflict theory can account for the rigid bureaucratization found in many social service agencies, and how social workers can circumvent this bureaucratization by playing key roles in the development and implementation of community-based child care services.

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research question.

Towards the end of and immediately following the Second World War, there was an increase in government reports, academic research, and social commentaries which emphasized the growing commitment of the Canadian federal government to social responsibility and to sharing the citizenry's risks of poor health, disability, poverty, age, and unemployment. These values were embodied in the federal government's introduction of legislation such as the Unemployment Act of 1940, the National Health and Welfare Act of 1944, the National Housing Act of 1944, and the Family Allowance Act of 1944. All of these statutes enabled the government to deliver programs which simultaneously reflected and reinforced the notion of collective responsibility for social well-being. Furthermore, they became a central aspect of the Canadian lifestyle and identity (Armstrong, 1997; Ursel, 1992).

Total government expenditure on social welfare programs increased from \$230 million in 1942-43 to \$573.8 million in 1945-46, and then leaped to \$793.5 million in 1947-48 (Guest, 1997). Hence, the postwar emergence of Canada's social security system is often referred to as the "golden age" of the modern welfare state (Campbell, 1997, p. 259).

There are various arguments as to what prompted the birth of the modern welfare state (many of which will be explored in later chapters), but one thing is certain: it was not unique to Canada. There was postwar electoral pressure by democratic populations in the United Kingdom, the United States, Holland, France, Scandinavia, as well as in Canada, that governments had to better respond to the needs

of the citizenry. Interestingly enough, parties and government leaders that veered toward the right on the political spectrum frequently helped to launch the modern welfare state. While there was probably electoral pragmatism involved in this, a number of conservatives had come to believe that laissez-faire capitalism played a major role in producing the two great horrors of the 1930s, i.e., Nazism and the Great Depression. Thus, there was considerable consensus that government needed to play an equalizing role in the economy (Broadbent, 1999).

Despite the widespread consensus within Canada that the government needed to become a more salient presence within society through the introduction of social welfare programs, there were differing opinions as to how the government should fulfill this role. In other words, there was no clear-cut consensus as to what type of programs should be introduced. Armstrong (1997) notes that, of the programs which emerged from the fledgling Canadian welfare state, some of them were

based on rights as citizens, some on rights as workers and some were specifically designed to support and protect the most vulnerable. Certainly the programs had flaws and many failed to fulfill the stated objectives. Some perpetuated inequality while others ignored such objectives entirely. Almost all were the result of struggle and compromise, conflict and debate. But all...were based on the notion that Canadians had shared rights and shared responsibilities and that they deserved some protection from the excesses of the market (p.55).

One program that was the focus of considerable controversy prior to its inception was the family allowance program. This is reflected in Davidson's (1944) comments that "seldom has any measure of social legislation attracted such a wide degree of comment in the public press. Seldom has there been such a widespread divergence in point of view as to the merits of any specific measure" (p. 2).



Despite various opinions on its suitability, Canada's first universal payment program, family allowance, was introduced on July 1, 1945 (Kitchen, 1981; Guest, 1997). This thesis focusses on how the factors which precipitated the introduction of the Canadian welfare state in general, and the family allowance program in particular, continue to influence and shape Canadian family policy, most notably its child care system. This is done by addressing the following research question: *How has child care in Canada been affected by the introduction of family allowance in 1945?* In order to clarify this question, it is necessary to define what is meant by *affect*, *family allowance*, and *child care*.

## 1.2 Definition of terms.

The *Houghton Mifflin Canadian Dictionary of the English Language* defines *affect* as "To have an influence on; bring about a change in" (Morris, 1982, p. 21).

*Family allowance* was first paid to Canadian families in 1945 as a means of assisting them with the costs of raising children. Payments were administered by the Department of National Health and Welfare, in the form of a monthly cheque sent to the main caregiver of the children, usually the mother. A set amount was paid for each child, initially under the age of 16 and later under 18 (Baker, 1995).

Doherty et al. (1998) note that *child care* refers to arrangements which provide care that enhance the development of children under the age of 12. The care is provided by people who are unrelated to the child. Child care services may be used by parents who are participating in the labour force or engaging in training or

educational programs, or it may be used by parents who are doing neither of these but wish to supplement the care and education they provide to their children.

Child care services in Canada include regulated centre-based and family child care (also known as family day care), nursery schools, kindergartens and Community Action Programs for Children (CAP-C). Although other arrangements such as family members, babysitters and nannies can be considered a form of child care, in this thesis child care, as it exists in Canada, will only refer to those child care centres, school-aged child care programs, and family child care programs that are regulated by provincial or territorial governments (Doherty et al., 1998).

### *1.3 Description of the problem.*

Although Canada is an affluent nation, unlike almost all of the western European countries, it has no national child care system to ensure that child care services are available to meet the needs of families and children across the country (Friendly and Oloman, 1996).

Cleveland and Krashinsky (1998) report that less than 10 percent of three year-old Canadian children were enrolled in a child care program in 1994, in comparison to an enrollment average of 40.4 percent across all *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development* (OECD) countries for the same population group (United States 27.6 percent, United Kingdom 43.7 percent, Japan 57 percent, Denmark 61 percent, and France, 99.3 percent).

Again referring to 1994, Cleveland and Krashinsky (1998) note that, by the time they reached age four, 48.2 percent of all Canadian

children were enrolled in some kind of child care program. For four year-olds living in other OECD countries, the average enrollment rate was 67.9 percent, with 80 to 100 percent rates being typical in most of the nations except for Canada and the United States.

Clearly, the Canadian child care system is lagging behind that of many other industrialized nations. Furthermore, the majority of Canadians want to see some changes. Jerome-Forget (1996) reports that, in a 1994 study, 64 percent of surveyed Canadians expressed support for a national child care program that would be funded through public expenditures and parental fees. In the most recent public opinion poll, conducted in 1998 for Human Resources Development Canada, 88 percent of Canadians polled strongly conveyed their desire for more government support for child care programs (Friendly, 2000).

Thus, although the majority of Canadians want to see a more comprehensive and standardized child care system, the current supply of child care services in Canada does not match the demand. Foster and Broad (1998b) report that, primarily because of economic globalization, two-fifths of the jobs available in Canada are part-time, short-term, and contracted positions. Most of the positions are in the service sector and are held by women, who often require flexible child care arrangements in order to meet both their paid work and family obligations. This requirement is not being met however, as a lack of affordable, quality child care has been identified by women working both full-and part-time as one of their greatest barriers in maintaining labour market participation and career advancement.

Epsing-Andersen (1989) notes that, although it is often assumed that the welfare state creates a more egalitarian society, with further

analysis it becomes apparent that the welfare state "is not just a mechanism that intervenes in, and possibly corrects, the structure of inequality; it is... a system of stratification. It orders actively and directly social relations" (p. 22).

The uneven and fragmented state of child care services across Canada exemplifies Epsing-Andersen's (1989) argument about the stratifying nature of the welfare state (Friendly and Oloman, 1996). Currently, women employed on a full-time, full-year basis have incomes approximately 73 percent that of men who are also employed on a full-time, full-year basis (Statistics Canada, 2000).

When one considers the aforementioned barriers women face in the labour market due to an inadequate child care system, at least part of the economic inequality between women and men may be attributed to this gap in the Canadian welfare state. Furthermore, a lack of quality child care services is one of the main components of what the *Caledon Institute of Social Policy* refer to as the welfare wall, i.e., the poverty trap faced by families (often single mothers) on social assistance who find themselves worse off when undertaking paid employment (Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1999). This is due to the loss of in-kind benefits such as health and dental coverage for both parents and children, and additional work-related expenses such as transportation costs, clothing, and child care.

Child care services have been used as a means to facilitate the entry of women into the workplace when it was deemed to be in the country's best interests, however. For instance, in 1942, during the midst of Canada's involvement in World War II, the federal government offered 50-50 cost-sharing to the provinces for the care of children

whose mothers were working in essential war industries. Only Ontario and Quebec participated, as other provinces declared they had no need for such services and/or were insufficiently industrialized to participate in the production of munitions (Friendly, 2000).

Following the war's end, the federal government ceased to support child care programs, as the general expectation was that working mothers with young children should return to the domestic sphere (Stapleford, 1976).

Just prior to the federal government's cessation of funding for child care, it introduced the family allowance program, described by Durst (1999) as the "mainstay of the Canadian social welfare scene for almost fifty years" (p. 31). The implications for the Canadian social policy landscape emanating from the decision to introduce the family allowance program and withdraw funds from child care services shortly thereafter are the central concern of this thesis.

According to Monique Jerome-Forget (1996), president of the Institute for Research on Public Policy, good social policy "is borne of careful analysis and an awareness of history, not merely the stitching together of anecdote and common sense" (p. 23). While the notion of "good" social policy is certainly a contentious issue which prompts much discussion and debate, when one considers how the foundation of Canada's current residual child care system was laid almost immediately following the Second World War by the federal government's withdrawal of funds, it is difficult to dispute the premise that the effects and implications of previous policies should be considered before designing and implementing new ones.

Hence, an analysis of what contributed to the federal government's decision to introduce family allowance as its first universal social

security measure, and to cease funding child care services shortly thereafter, provides further understanding into how Canada's current social security system was formed, and serves as an impetus for generating relevant policy recommendations.

It is important to note that this writer is not seeking to establish a causal relationship between the introduction of family allowance and the absence of a national child care program in Canada. It is not a case of "if  $x$  (family allowance) then  $y$  (absence of a national child care system)." Nor is this writer trying to prove that the ultimate purpose of family allowance was to supplant child care. As will be discussed, there was a multitude of factors that prompted the introduction of family allowance. However, this thesis addresses how the introduction of the family allowance program and the arguments, ideological factors, events, and decisions that led to its inception *affected or influenced* the means by which child care programs were, and were not, instituted in this country.

It should also be noted that family allowances, in and of themselves, do not discourage child care services. For example, France's child care services are among the most comprehensive in the world and in 1991 its universal family allowance, which was instituted in 1932, was over six times the value to French families that of Canada's allowance to Canadian families (Baker, 1995).

#### *1.4 Theoretical approach.*

Gil (1992) states that the development of social policies tends to proceed in a fragmented manner in relation to different elements of the common domains of social policies such as wages, pensions, profits, and wealth; labor, commerce,

industry, and agriculture; housing, education, health and recreation; the needs and rights of children, women, families, and the aging; intergroup relations; social deviance, etc. The fragmented and inconsistent quality of the "normal" processes of social policy formulation reflect their political nature, that is, their roots in conflicts of real or perceived interests of diverse groupings within society at large (p. 106).

Given the contentious nature of the policy process, to employ a theory which focuses on conflict is fitting for the subject matter of this thesis, i.e., a detailed analysis of the dynamics that prompted the introduction of one social program (family allowance), and the introduction and subsequent withdrawal of funding for another (child care).

Collins (1985) notes that *conflict theory* is a broad perspective which includes all of what takes place in any given society. Its main argument is that conflict is present in all facets of social functioning, and that the social order consists of groups and individuals trying to advance their own interests over others whether or not overt outbreaks take place in this struggle for advantage. Moreover, conflict theorists tend to focus on historical developments and long-term processes of change.

Conflict theory has a lengthy history. For instance, around 500 B.C. the Greek philosopher Heraclitus wrote that "Strife is the father of all things...Being at variance it agrees with itself: there is a back-stretched connection, as in the bow and the lyre" (Collins, 1985, p. 47).

Conflict theory is also found in the writings of the political theorist from the Italian Renaissance, Niccolo Machiavelli, and in the works of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century economists Malthus and Ricardo. The mode of analysis considered by many to be at

the center of the conflict tradition is *Marxism* (Collins, 1985).

Included in Marxist theory is the incorporation of the concept of the *dialectic*, or process of historical change, as outlined by the political philosopher Georg Hegel (1770-1831). While Hegel saw the history of humanity being spiritually motivated, Marxist theory adheres to *dialectical materialism*, in which conflict over the control of a society's means of production (i.e., the resources and technology that provide the basis for economic development) is the impetus for all historical processes. While differing over its primary cause and its essential elements (i.e., spirituality versus materialism) Hegelianism and Marxism do share the same conceptual view of the dialectic (Baradat, 1994).

The dialectic is a process whereby the given state of affairs (for Marxists this would mean the dominant controllers of the means of production) within any society, called the *thesis*, is challenged by another state of affairs, or the *antithesis*. Conflict between the thesis and antithesis will ensue until a blending of the beneficial parts of the competing forces occurs. This is known as a *synthesis*. The synthesis then becomes a thesis, which is then challenged by an antithesis, and eventually another synthesis transpires. According to classical Marxist theory, this process of historical development, beginning with *primitive communism*, or the state of existence that focused on basic sustenance, evolved into the eras of *empire* (based on slavery), *feudalism* (when serfs were governed by the landed aristocracy), which eventually succumbed to the forces of *capitalism* (domination of working class by the bourgeoisie). Classical Marxists maintain that capitalism is both exploitative and contradictory and



cite the unequal distribution of resources as evidence of this. They predict capitalism will eventually be overtaken by a form of proletariat (working class) rule in which a classless society will emerge, whereby all goods will be held in common (Baradat, 1994).

Collins (1985) states that the emphasis in Marxism on conflict as being an impetus for change transcends the economic scenarios the theory envisions and may be used to comprehend and analyze a multitude of social processes and changes over time:

The sociological flywheel comes loose; we can discard the economic machine entirely if we like. We are still left with a series of principles that show who wins what degree of political power, and why. The bourgeoisie need not always win; it becomes possible to explain the conditions under which we get various liberal reforms, representation of working-class interests, as well as class splits. In short we have a powerful tool for understanding all the messy realities of politics (p. 72).

Given the complexity of capitalist societies, their political processes cannot be framed as simply showdowns between the elite and the governed but consist of complex maneuvers by many separately mobilized interest groups. Thus, politics is a form of negotiation and strategizing by complicated coalitions (Collins, 1985).

The state is often construed as the receptacle of political processes, and the means by which outcomes of these processes are implemented and enforced. This is reflected in Jackson and Jackson's (1994) definition of the state "as a form of political organization in which governmental institutions are capable of maintaining order and implementing rules or laws (through coercion if necessary) over a given population and within a given territory" (pp. 14-15).

The ongoing source of conflict and tension within the capitalist state can be partially ascribed to its aim of achieving two basic yet

seemingly contradictory functions, i.e., *accumulation* and *legitimization*. In other words, the state seeks to maintain or create the conditions in which profitable capital accumulation is possible (e.g., subsidies to private industry), while at the same time it attempts to maintain or create the conditions for social harmony (e.g., labor restrictions on the amount of hours employees may work or the passage of social welfare legislation). Overtly, the accumulation and legitimization functions of the state may appear contradictory, but there are complementary aspects to them as well. For instance, taxation policies aimed at income redistribution for the purpose of legitimization might impede short-term accumulation, but are necessary for maintaining accumulation over time and may perhaps even accelerate it (Porter and Taplin, 1987; Panitch, 1977).

Participating in the state are its inhabitants, or population, who are both separated and intertwined by virtue of their *classes*. Arriving at a definition of class is controversial and problematic, however. It may refer to objective indicators such as education, occupation, and income (Jackson and Jackson, 1994). It can also refer to more subjective, but nonetheless significant, indicators, such as the relative power, privilege, advantage and prestige of a social group (Johnson, 1995).

Conflict theory proposes that within the state, different classes, whose values, interests, and behaviours differ from one another, will compete for resources and power, and those who achieve power will attempt to sustain it (Mullaly, 1997). Applying conflict theory to the policy arena, Wolfe (1989) explains how public policy is a result of those conflicts between classes as mediated through the internal

structures and organizational forms of the state (i.e., bureaucracies) and that

policy outcomes are not determined within the state apparatus in a random or pluralist fashion. The specific hierarchical distribution of power among the departments and branches of the bureaucracy constitutes the...means through which the hegemony of the dominant class, as embodied in the accumulation strategy, is organized...the hierarchical distribution of power among these various agencies favour a certain set of concerns over and against others. However, the distribution of power within the state apparatus also incorporates the interests of other classes and class fractions within the policy framework determined by the hegemonic fraction to produce an 'unstable equilibrium' (p. 108).

Citing the Canadian political system as an example of a state containing a hierarchical distribution of power, Mahon (1977) explains how the Department of Finance is one of the system's chief integrative mechanisms. Through its dominant position within fiscal, economic, monetary, and commercial matters, it plays a key role in the government's budgetary process, which translates into control over social expenditures and legitimization. The Department of Finance is influential in foreign policy as well, as it defines Canada's role in relation to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

The public policies which are the focus of this thesis, i.e., family allowance and child care, belong primarily to the legitimization domain of the state. In other words, they serve to maintain the conditions for social harmony (Panitch, 1977).

It is evident that the welfare state is the formalized embodiment of the legitimization domain of the state, when one considers Armitage's (1996) definition of the welfare state as being a state which is committed to using resources "primarily for the collective welfare...In the immediate postwar period it was used to indicate that

totality of legislation whereby social security (in its broad sense) was obtained" (p. 195).

Given that the policies which flow from the state, including its legitimization sphere (i.e., the welfare state) are products of a conflict-ridden process, it stands to reason that the "welfare state has both social care and social control functions, it contains both liberating and oppressive features" (Mullaly, 1997, p. 127). Thus, the theoretical emphasis employed in this thesis that conflict is an impetus for social processes and historical changes includes an acute awareness of the bifurcated nature of the Canadian welfare state, including the programs which are being scrutinized most closely: family allowance and child care (Porter and Taplin, 1987).

#### *1.5 Research method/data collection strategies.*

The research method in this thesis is an unobtrusive form of research known as *historical/comparative analysis*, which involves tracing the development of social forms and patterns over time and may also involve comparing developmental processes across cultures (Rubin and Babbie, 1997). In contrast to *nostalgia*, or the retelling of past pleasantries, events, or situations, historical researchers employ rigorous research methods in order to systematically recapture the complex nuances, the people, meanings, events, and even ideas of the past that have influenced and shaped the present (Berg, 1998).

In this thesis this writer obtains information from both *primary* and *secondary* materials in an attempt to better understand the social forces that have shaped (and continue to shape) Canadian family policy. Primary sources include parliamentary debates found in the *Hansard*,

whereas the main source of secondary materials are journal articles and textbooks which include contributions by various academics (Berg, 1998; Brundage, 1997).

Tuchman (1998) asserts that in order to grasp historical information, "one must have a point of view, including an interpretive framework that includes some notion of the 'meaning' of history" (p. 226). As explained in the previous section (1.4), the interpretive framework employed in this thesis emphasizes conflict among different classes and groups as being a primary catalyst for social change over time.

#### *1.6 Thesis outline.*

While some may question the relevance of historical research for an applied profession such as social work, historical research, as noted by Berg (1998), "extends beyond a mere collection of incidents, facts, dates, or figures. It is the study of the relationships among issues that have influenced the past, continue to influence the present, and *will certainly affect the future*"[emphasis added] (p. 199).

Although much has been written about both the introduction of Canada's family allowance program and the contemporary scarcity of regulated, publicly-funded child care services, there is a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between these two policy stances. In an earnest attempt to fill this void, this writer utilizes historical evidence sources to illustrate how the current underdevelopment of child care services in Canada is related to the introduction of the family allowance program. Thus, this thesis proceeds from an in-depth analysis of past events and processes to an

explanation of the current state of affairs. Recommendations for future policy developments are also made.

Chapter 2 focusses on the introduction of the family allowance program, as well as the introduction and the subsequent withdrawal of federally-funded child care services. Chapter 3 discusses the eventual re-entry of federal provisions for child care services, albeit in a limited sense, and the current child care scenario in Canada. Chapter 4 provides a comparative analysis of two countries with child care systems far more comprehensive than Canada's, Sweden and France. Chapter 5, which is the concluding chapter, considers the role social workers can play in developing a more comprehensive child care system in Canada. Evidence for how Canada might benefit from a national child care system and a series of child care policy recommendations are presented in Appendices A and B.

## CHAPTER 2 - EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY ALLOWANCE AND CHILD CARE

### *2.1 The Introduction of Family Allowance in Canada.*

Although several European countries introduced family allowance programs prior to and during the 1920s, there was no official interest in such a scheme in Canada until 1929, when the House of Commons established a Select Standing Committee to examine insurance for the unemployed, the sick, and the disabled. Included in the discussions were lively debates surrounding a family allowance program for Canadians (Durst, 1999; Guest, 1997).

The chief proponent of family allowance programs was a Quebec Jesuit priest, Father Leon Lebel, who proposed that the inadequacy of the average industrial wage was contributing towards a drop in the birthrate and to a migration of the population to the United States. He argued that because of the importance of children as future citizens and members of the labour force, a voluntary system of family allowances paid by employers should be instituted.

Countering this proposal was Charlotte Whitton, executive director of the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare, who opposed the introduction of a family allowance program with three main objections: a) it would be an admission that wages in Canada were substandard; b) parental responsibility would be undermined; and c) the costs to fund such a scheme would be excessive (Guest, 1997). Durst (1999) notes that no consensus was arrived at regarding family allowances, and "the discussion faded with the stock market crash of 1929 and the beginning

of the Great Depression" (p. 33).

Although family allowances were mentioned only once in Parliament between 1930 and 1943, interest in social security was fomented by the publication of the Beveridge Report in 1942. Officially entitled *The Report on Social Insurance and Allied Service*, it was written by the British economist and sociologist Sir William Beveridge. Not only were the British receptive to this blueprint for their postwar reconstruction plans, but the report was warmly received by Canadians and Americans as well (Breul, 1953; Guest, 1987; Guest, 1997).

The Beveridge Report was divided into three main sections. They were: a) a comprehensive scheme of social insurance to maintain incomes when they were interrupted by any cause; b) comprehensive health services; and c) a system of children's allowances to be paid to all parents regardless of their employment status. These three components of the proposed social security system were to be built upon a policy of full, gainful employment, something Beveridge believed could not be achieved solely through the market (Guest, 1987).

In 1943, McGill University's Leonard Marsh tabled his *Report on Social Security for Canada*, dubbed by many as the "Canadian version of the Beveridge report" (Irving, 1995, p. 215). The Marsh Report provided a comprehensive guide for establishing a social security system in Canada. Among its proposals were universal children's allowances and a public medical plan (Guest, 1987). Although many of the Report's recommendations received a significant deal of government attention, several of them were not acted upon, at least not initially. For example, Canada's Medicare Act was not promulgated until 1968, although the governments of Saskatchewan and British Columbia did



introduce hospital insurance in the years 1947 and 1949, respectively (Armitage, 1996; Finkel, 1977; Swartz, 1977).

Breul (1953) explains that the first official indication that the Canadian government was considering the introduction of family allowances appeared in the Speech from the Throne of 1944, which announced that the

family and the home are the foundation of national life. To aid in ensuring a minimum of well-being to children and help gain for them a closer approach to equality of opportunity in the battle of life, you will be asked to approve a measure making provision for family allowances (p. 271).

Although there were varying opinions on its suitability, Canada's first universal welfare payment program, family allowance, was introduced on July 1, 1945 (Kitchen, 1981; Guest, 1997). By May 1946, over 90 percent of all Canadian families with children under 16 years of age were in receipt of family allowance benefits. The average monthly payment per family was \$14.18, and \$5.94 per child. This amounted to about eight percent of the average industrial wage in Canada (Kitchen, 1987; Guest, 1997).

Durst (1999) notes that, as a new social security measure, family allowance was unique for several reasons. To begin, those in receipt of the program never asked for it, as it was introduced at a time when most Canadians were wrapped up in the war effort and gave little thought to such a scheme. Also, despite the fact that family allowance became a key component in the emerging welfare state in Canada, it did not develop from welfare commissions or inquiries. Rather, its designers were senior bureaucrats in the Departments of External Affairs and Finance as well as the Governor of the Bank of Canada; people who had played key roles in managing Canada's war economy and

who were strongly intertwined with commerce.

Breul (1953) proposed that it "is doubtful whether any single argument or factor was determining in Canada's decision to adopt a system of family allowances" (p. 269). This is buttressed by the fact that there are three leading arguments cited in the literature as to what prompted family allowances. These arguments are reviewed in this section. They are: a) a response by a socially conscious government and Prime Minister to ensure the well-being of Canadian families; b) a strategic tool used by a business-oriented government to offset the demands of labour for higher wages and to control inflationary pressures; and c) a means of enhancing the purchasing power of consumers and maintaining an active postwar economy.

#### *2.1.1 The socially responsive government argument.*

Although by the late 1930s the economies of various countries were beginning to recover from the Great Depression, the effects of unemployment and poverty were still significant (Guest, 1997). For example, Pett (1943) reported that a study conducted in the United Kingdom in 1939 found that the diets of at least 50 percent of the country's population fell short of the desired standard, and that similar results were found in other countries, including Canada and the United States.

Income and nutritional studies conducted in Canada during the early 1940s revealed that only 44 percent of wage earners outside agriculture had incomes sufficient to guarantee them adequate and nutritious diets (Guest, 1997). At the same time, Canada had the highest infant mortality rate of all the so-called "developed" countries in the

British Empire. Furthermore, the *Heagerty Commission*, endorsed by the House of Commons in 1943, reported that the majority of Canadians did not have incomes sufficient to cover the costs of medical care for lengthy or serious illnesses. Thus, the basic needs of adequate food and health care were beyond the financial resources of many Canadian families (Ursel, 1992). Consequently, many concerned social commentators viewed the proposed introduction of family allowances as an effective way to alleviate the problems of hunger and want. This is apparent in the following excerpt from a 1944 issue of the Canadian journal *The Social Worker*:

Advocates of children's allowances argue...that poverty caused by bringing up children is not relieved by any such social services, and that there is no substitute for increased income. Furthermore...they usually advocate children's allowances in cash in addition to allowances in kind - i.e., such services as housing, medical care, education, etc., which they agree can only be provided collectively. Thus one supplements the other and they are not mutually exclusive. A 1938 Norwegian report "advised that collective effort was best for such needs as housing and medical attention, but that for day by day needs of life in a country where the population is scattered and transport slow and expensive, children's allowances are preferable" ("Family Allowances," 1944, p. 5).

Given his acute awareness of the breadth of poverty afflicting many Canadians during the war era, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King happily adopted family allowances as part of the federal government's postwar social security system. King was known for believing in the need for comprehensive social programs long before the birth of the modern welfare state. This is reflected in the 1918 publication of his book *Industry and humanity: A Study in the principles underlying industrial reconstruction* (Blake, 1995).

Despite his proclivity for government intervention, there is general agreement among social and political historians that King was a

cautious politician who introduced policies only when he was convinced they would serve the interests of Canada as well as his own party and leadership status. Thus, given the fact that the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) formed the Saskatchewan government in 1944, led the national polls in 1945 and, incidentally, openly endorsed the family allowance scheme, it stands to reason that at least partly influencing King's decision to introduce family allowances was the wish to enhance the status of his party (Blake, 1995; Broadbent, 1999; "Family Allowances," 1944).

Furthermore, Blake (1995) reports that King was influenced by international discussions on social security and family allowances, and believed that by introducing social welfare provisions he would re-establish his claim to be a pioneer in the social security field, a claim he often made to other allied leaders. For example, in a January 1943 diary entry, King (cited in Blake, 1995), wrote that "I should be happy indeed if I could round out my career with legislation in the nature of social security" (p. 247).

Clearly, the government's realization of its obligation to respond to the social and health concerns of Canadians both during and following the war contributed to the development of the modern welfare state, including the family allowance program. Hence, it is not surprising that many frame the family allowance as an appropriate intervention initiated by an ostensibly socially conscious federal government and Prime Minister. While this explanation certainly carries merit, it does not account for the conflict that underlies social changes and developments. Conflict does, however, play a key role in the next argument as to what prompted the family allowance

program.

### *2.1.2 The strategy of a business-oriented government argument.*

Canada's war economy was a boon economy, as it established itself as a thriving industrial nation. For example, Canada's economy expanded its output by about two-thirds during the war years of 1939 to 1944. Between 1939 and 1942 private investment increased by 80 percent and public investment by 201 percent. The unemployment rate dropped to 1.4 percent. The manufacturing sector was particularly vibrant, as evinced by the fact that in 1939 less than 16 percent of the labour force was employed in manufacturing, whereas by 1944 this sector employed more than 26 percent of all workers (Ursel, 1992).

This rise of employment was accompanied by rapid growth in labour discontent and union membership. For example, between 1939 and 1944 organized labour doubled its membership in Canada, and in 1943 one out of every three unionized workers was involved in a capital/labour conflict (Ursel, 1992).

At least partially responsible for labour's unhappiness was the fact that the federal government instituted a number of anti-inflationary measures, including a policy of rigid wage control which began in 1941. The government argued that if it did not employ such stringent controls excessive inflation would ensue, and this would hamper both the war effort and lead the economy into a recession or even a depression after the war (there was a slumping economy following World War I and many worried that the same would occur following World War II unless appropriate measures were taken). One drawback to this inflation control was that the wage freeze on labourers, whose rate of

pay was less than fifty cents per hour, led to serious declines in their standards of living (Kitchen, 1981).

The wage control program was challenged in March 1942, when labourers from two steel companies applied to their regional war labour boards for an increase in wages. The demands of the steel workers were denied by the labour boards. Consequently, they went on strike, which was particularly significant because the steel industry was necessary for the production of war materials. Not surprisingly, the government was gravely concerned about the ongoing conflicts between labour and capital, particularly because so many of the strikes and work stoppages threatened the production of goods used in the war effort. In June 1943 the Deputy Minister of Finance, W.C. Clark, sent a memorandum to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, in which he stated that the introduction of family allowances might be considered a workable compromise that would allow for the continuation of wage freezes but would provide more discretionary income for lower-paid workers. This, he reasoned, would reduce the number of strikes and sustain the war effort (Kitchen, 1981).

The following excerpt from internal government documents reveals how family allowance was framed as a strategic tool that would act in the interests of business in its on-going struggle with labour:

Children's allowances are the most direct and economic method of meeting the current strong demand for relaxation of wage control in respect of the lower wage rates. If current dissatisfaction of lower-paid workers is met by allowing them unrestricted wage bargaining (and thus promoting union organization), a good deal of industrial strife and stoppage of essential work must be expected...Children's allowances are likely to protect Canada's ability to compete with other countries in world markets. In the long run, minimum wages and average wages are likely to be pushed higher in the absence of family allowances than they would be if this supplementary equalizing measure were in

effect (Finance Files, June 14, 1943, in Ursel, 1992, p. 195).

Although King publicly announced minor adjustments to the wage control program and the introduction of a cost of living bonus in 1943, he made no mention of the plans of his government to introduce family allowances. Many feel that had he done so he would have been wide open to an attack by labour that family allowances were deliberately chosen as a way for the government to protect its wage and price stabilization policy and to prevent what it considered excessive wage increases for the working class (Kitchen, 1987).

Kitchen (1987) has suggested that the introduction of family allowance was so strongly motivated to covertly appease labour that the universality of the program was introduced so as to obfuscate the connection between family allowances and wage control. Interestingly enough, an excerpt from a 1944 social work journal indicates that many in labour came to support the notion of family allowances:

Trade union opinion is much more in favour of children's allowances than it used to be, provided they are a state measure and not geared to industry, as has been done for the most part on the European continent. It is interesting that the C.C.F. Party has recommended children's allowances for Canada, which would seem to indicate that labour is no longer afraid of its effects on its bargaining powers ("Family Allowances," 1944).

### 2.1.3 *The Economic Argument.*

Before explaining the economic rationale for the introduction of family allowances, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the macroeconomic theory on which the proposed feasibility of the program rested, i.e., Keynesianism.

As a nation strongly dependent upon primary export production, Canada was particularly hard hit by the world-wide decline in prices

that characterized the Depression years of the early 1930s. Due to the widespread poverty and high rates of unemployment, many social workers and social scientists placed emphasis on the deficits of the market economy in their analyses of social problems. Charlotte Whitton argued that social workers had to accept the fact that many of the problems their clients struggled with were economic rather than moral in origin (Owram, 1995).

Owram (1995) frames the Depression era as empirical verification of the emerging belief that

remote economic events could shape the lives of thousands of men and women whose past environment, habits, and outlook had none of the classical symptoms of social problem groups. By the 1930s few within the intellectual community and fewer still within the social sciences would have argued with the notion that the "sources of unemployment may generally be found in causes wholly independent of the workmen involved and over which they have no control." The belief developed that economics determined other environmental and personal conditions and that those economic factors were largely beyond the control of the individual. As this perception of social conditions grew, those who could claim some expertise in the mysteries of economic causation rose in prestige accordingly (pp. 178-179).

The economist whose ideas were readily accepted following the Depression was Britain's John Maynard Keynes, whose 1936 publication, the *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* significantly reshaped Canadian economic thought (Kitchen, 1981; Owram, 1995).

Keynesian theory focuses on the idea that appropriate and effective government intervention should level out the vicissitudes found in the market economy and thus avoid the periodic depressions that characterize a capitalist system. From a Keynesian perspective, the Great Depression was caused by a lack of investment and a falling level of consumer demand. In times of heavy unemployment, such as during the



Depression, the worst thing that can happen to a slumping economy did in fact occur, i.e., a reduction in spending by both the government and the general population, which resulted in a decrease in the overall level of income and further economic stagnation (Pitsula and Rasmussen, 1990).

Pitsula and Rasmussen (1990) explain that the theoretical foundations for Keynesian economics and the welfare state are closely intertwined. Keynesian theory maintains that a high level of consumer demand (i.e., propensity to spend) is required for a prosperous economy. This is not easy to achieve however, when disproportionate amounts of wealth and income are distributed throughout society. Therefore, in order to avoid and minimize economic recessions, money needs to be put into the hands of people who will spend it. Hence, from a Keynesian perspective, a comprehensive welfare state, while providing services and augmenting incomes to ensure the well-being of all members of society, particularly the most vulnerable, simultaneously serves to fuel the economy by enhancing the purchasing power of consumers.

Following the election of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King during the throes of the Depression in 1935, political debate was polarized between the conflictual arguments of socialized state planning and *laissez-faire* decentralization. Emerging from this dialectical process was the *Rowell-Sirois Commission*, also known as the *Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations*. The Commission, appointed in 1937, released its report in 1940 (Armitage, 1996; Bradford, 1999).

Receiving more than 400 public briefs and organizing a major policy

research program, the Commission devised a new public policy approach to national development and federal purpose that was linked to Keynesian macroeconomic and social policy thought (Bradford, 1999). This is evident from a central conclusion of the Commission which stated that not only "national duty and decency, if Canada is to be a nation at all, but equity and national self-interest demand that the residents of these (impoverished) regions be given average services and equal opportunities" (Armitage, 1996, p. 199).

Kitchen (1987) highlights the conflict that occurred prior to the federal government's passage of The Family Allowance Act in 1944 by noting that the pros and cons of the proposed program were debated by persons using various economic arguments. Many placed emphasis on Keynesian economic principles as the rationale for family allowances, as it was argued that the program could stimulate the economy by increasing the spending capacity of Canadians. Thus, many felt that family allowances could help prevent a postwar economic recession and any social unrest that may result from such a recession.

The economic rationale for introducing family allowances was also recognized by social work academic George Davidson (1944), who predicted prior to the program's inception that it would assist in maintaining a high degree of domestic purchasing power. This, he argued, would create a demand for consumer goods that would itself contribute towards the maintenance of a high level of employment. In other words, he reasoned along Keynesian lines that the very act of purchasing creates employment because employees are needed to both produce and sell goods that are demanded.

While there are other explanations as to what prompted the

introduction of the family allowance program in Canada, the ones discussed in this chapter are the most prominent. As noted by Gil (1992), policy analysis requires not only descriptive knowledge of issues but insights into their underlying dynamics as well. Emphasis was placed in this section on the underlying dynamics (including capital/labour conflict) that brought about the family allowance program. It is a gross oversimplification to suggest that there was only one cause or reason that ignited the scheme's inception. Rather, a multitude of interacting and conflicting political, economic, and social forces led to the emergence of Canada's first social security program.

## *2.2 The origins of child care in Canada.*

Between 1880 and 1900, Canada's urban population more than doubled, as it increased from 14 to 37 percent of the entire population (Wallace, 1950). There were a number of social concerns which emanated from this rapid growth in urbanization and industrialization. For example, the conclusions from a series of federal investigations in 1882 and 1885 on working conditions in Canada commented on the exploitation of children in factories and the squalid and dangerous working conditions faced by many employees (Guest, 1997).

Along with the work-related problems accompanying Canada's entry into the industrial age, the transition from rural to urban life made childrearing more difficult for many families. Parents were obliged to leave their homes in order to eke out a living and, with the decline of extended family networks, in some cases there was no one left behind to look after their children. Sometimes children were left with an older

sibling, other times they were tied to a bedpost while their mothers worked (Schulz, 1978).

By the late nineteenth century there was a noticeable increase in the number of neglected and what were considered delinquent children in the industrialized cities. Consequently, the daytime care of children grew as a social concern, as an expanding number of impoverished and widowed women, with incomes too low to hire domestic assistance, were often unable to care for their young children because they had to leave their homes to work (Baker, 1995). Not only single mothers faced poverty, since nineteenth-century families were legally-sanctioned patriarchies, with husbands/fathers having sole guardianship of their children and legal control over the income of their wives. Women had little economic control in their homes and no public recourse if their families were in financial straits. Furthermore, domestic violence towards women was not recognized by the state as a public or social concern (Burt, 1999).

Public child care centres were established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. They enabled single mothers to work, and employment agencies often formed an important part of these centres. The majority of women accessing the centres were employed as domestic servants, and since there was a perceived shortage of domestic help throughout the early part of the twentieth century, the employment agencies were ascribed as having considerable utility by the middle- and upper-class women who managed the child care centres (this is because they could hire impoverished women coming in to drop off their children as domestic servants). Annual reports maintained by the managers of the centres consistently outlined the number of days of

care provided for the children and the numbers of days of employment offered to their parents, often within the same paragraph (Schulz, 1978).

In cases where families were unable to look after their infants or children, orphanages were established by churches and other charitable organizations. These institutions were funded through donations and volunteer labour. Children residing in the orphanages were expected to work for their board if they were deemed physically and mentally capable of doing so (Baker, 1995).

The number of neglected and/or delinquent children who were placed in orphanages or similar institutions began to decrease during the early 1900s, as more emphasis was placed on children being raised in a family-type environment whenever possible (Baker, 1995). This shift can be at least partially attributed to the model of foster care developed by J.J. Kelso of Toronto. Kelso, a newspaper reporter and social reformer, founded the Toronto Humane Society for the prevention of cruelty to children and animals in 1887 and the Toronto Children's Aid Society in 1891. Kelso and his colleagues preferred foster homes over institutions as a means of caring for neglected children, as they believed children were more apt to experience a 'normal' family environment in a foster home than in an institution. This, they surmised, would lessen the children's chances of engaging in criminal activities, both as youths and later as adults (Macintyre, 1993; Moscovitch and Drover, 1987).

In 1922 a new branch of the federal government titled the Division of Child Welfare produced a series of booklets which contained child-rearing advice. The Division also established clinics for expectant

mothers and newborns as part of a campaign to reduce infant mortality. Within this milieu of emphasis on the well-being of the child, nursery schools began to emerge in Canada (Baker, 1995).

The theoretical and philosophical foundations of the burgeoning nursery school movement resided in the *Institute of Child Study*. The Institute, established at the University of Toronto during the 1920s, was heavily laden with theories derived from the progressive education movement and the blossoming social science of psychology (Friendly, 2000; Schulz, 1978). Schulz (1978) states that these nursery schools

reflected a growing understanding that preschool education could play a valuable role in supplementing a child's home rearing. The nursery schools usually provided half-day programmes, primarily to middle-class children whose parents were often involved in the running of the schools (p. 144) -

It is important to note that the nursery schools were not designed to care for the children of low-income working women. Rather, they were set up as educational facilities for children aged two to five who came from middle-class homes. Service providers and users of nursery schools were quick to distinguish the schools from child care centres, or day nurseries as they were often called, whose primary function was to provide custodial care for the children of working mothers. Nursery schools, funded primarily through private contributions from foundation grants or from fees charged to parents, provided rich and varied programs which included educational and nutritional care as well as an emphasis on physical activity (Turner, 1981).

Children of working mothers who attended child care centres received services that were of much poorer quality than those bestowed to their more affluent nursery school counterparts (Lind and Prentice, 1992). Schulz (1978) states that the centres

provided from one to three meals a day plus snacks. Breakfasts were often necessary because the mothers had to get up so early, and suppers were served because the mothers were too tired or too poor to provide them. From a modern perspective, nutrition was inadequate...the children...were receiving a vegetable soup in which a bone had been cooked, a piece of bread without butter, and a pudding or fruit (p. 142).

Baker (1995) explains that a substantial degree of contention surrounded the day nurseries during the 1920s, as there were conflicting opinions over what policy stance was preferable: provide welfare benefits to impoverished women so they could stay at home to look after their children, or offer child care services so they could work outside the home. Consequently, the fledgling child care movement of the 1920s failed to thrive. Turner (1981) states one reason for this was the

economic depressions of 1913-14 and the early 1920s. Women's labour was increasingly unnecessary in industry and undesirable in private homes. Fewer domestic servants was the result of the development of home economics programs, a general rise in technology in household services and the growing middle class that encouraged women in the home caring for her family. And with fewer women employed, there was less need for day nursery services (p. 91).

Along with these changes in the market, the inauguration of mothers' allowances served to legitimize the notion that low-income mothers should reside in the private sphere rather than place their children in day care facilities and attempt to eke out a living in the public domain. The movement to inaugurate mothers' allowances began in 1910, when the Mother's Association of Winnipeg supplied funds to a woman using their child care facility so she could stay at home to look after her children (Strong-Boag, 1995).

Although single mothers widowed in World War I were only one segment of the lone parent population, the war acted as an impetus for

governments to assume some responsibility for financially supporting single mothers and their children. This is evinced with the multitude of mothers' allowances programs introduced during 1916 to 1920. The five provinces west of Quebec, starting with Manitoba in 1916, Saskatchewan in 1917, Alberta in 1919, and British Columbia and Ontario in 1920, preceded their eastern counterparts in this social welfare legislation as well as in granting women enfranchisement (Friendly, 1994; Strong-Boag, 1995).

Freudian psychology grew in acceptance during the 1930s, and this provided a theoretical justification for minimizing the need for child care services, as many posited it was in children's best interests if their mothers stayed at home with them. Furthermore, representatives from both capital and labour felt that child care services would encourage women to work outside of the home and compete with male breadwinners, which, they argued, would result in the disintegration of the family unit (Baker, 1995). Contentious debates surrounding the proper role of women, the best interests of children, and the ideal structure of a family were held in abeyance during the late 1930s and early 1940s, however, as Canada entered World War II.

### *2.3 The rise and fall of federally-funded child care services.*

Pierson (1986) notes that when the Canadian government declared war on Germany in September 1939, the nation still felt the effects of the Great Depression. Out of a population of approximately 11 million, about 900,000 workers were unemployed, and an estimated 20 percent of these were women. Of the roughly 600,000 women who were employed, more than one-third of them had jobs as domestic servants. By entering the



war, Canada's economy was rejuvenated while concomitantly its military expanded. Consequently, in 1941-42 attention turned to "womanpower" to relieve the "manpower" shortages that were threatening both the armed forces and industry (p. 3). Hence, the government decided to recruit women into the labour force - including women with children (Schulz, 1978). In 1941 there were about 720,000 women employed outside of their homes. This number rose to 1,200,000 by 1943, with many women finding employment in nontraditional industries such as war manufacturing (McWilliams, 1944; Ursel, 1992).

The federal government agency responsible for recruiting women into the war-time economy was the *National Selective Service* (NSS), which was established in March 1942 through thirteen Orders-in-Council. Placed under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Labour (Humphrey Mitchell), the NSS initially recruited single women. But due to ongoing labour shortages, the director of the Women's Division of the NSS, Fraudena Eaton of Vancouver, recruited married women as well, including married women with children (Pierson, 1986; Schulz, 1978).

This shift in the gender composition of the labour market was accompanied by a novel development in the embryonic Canadian welfare state: a cost-shared agreement between the federal government and the provinces was established to provide child care services for those women who had children and were working in the war industry (Baker, 1995; Prentice, 1995). The agreement, inaugurated in 1942 with the introduction of the *Dominion-Provincial Day Nurseries Act*, offered 50-50 cost-sharing for child care services to all of the provinces. Only Ontario and Quebec took up the federal government's offer, however, as other provinces reported they were insufficiently industrialized and

did not require child care services (Prentice, 1995).

Along with the introduction of cost-shared child care services, the federal government amended the taxation system in July 1942, in order to provide an economic incentive for women to enter the work force. Prior to July 1942, a married woman whose husband also received an income could earn up to \$750 without her husband losing his claim to the full married status tax exemption. The revision of July 1942, however, granted the husband whose wife was working the full married status tax exemption regardless of the size of his wife's earned income. This tax concession was considered a wartime provision intended to encourage married women to enter, and stay in, the labour market. Through 1946, husbands paid no tax on any income up to \$1,200, regardless of their wives' earnings. Wives paid tax on income exceeding \$660 (Pierson, 1986).

A condition of eligibility in the new child care scheme was that the majority of children receiving services had to be those whose mothers were directly involved in the production of war materials. This stipulation is explained in a 1942 issue of the journal *Canadian Welfare*:

Day Nursery services, under the Agreement, will be primarily for children whose mothers are engaged in war industry...children whose mothers are not specifically employed in war industry may be admitted to nurseries, providing their number is not more than twenty-five percent of the total in any one nursery, and that there are no unfilled applications from mothers employed in war industry residing in the locality ("Dominion-Provincial Agreement," 1942, p. 11).

Thus, many women who supported their families during the war but were not employed in war manufacturing were denied access to child care services. Many newspaper editorials asserted that this practice was

irrational, as all industry contributed to the nation's economy and the war effort in one way or another. A vigorous campaign to extend child care eligibility was maintained throughout the war years by day care centres, social welfare agencies, and local boards of education. In 1944, an amendment was made to the *Dominion-Provincial Day Nurseries Act* to include children of all working mothers. Nonetheless, the amendment stipulated that the children of mothers who were working in the war industry were still to have priority for admission (Pierson, 1986; Schulz, 1978).

The care children received at the daytime nurseries was lauded by concerned observers. The nurseries were open Monday through Friday, from about 7:00 or 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 or 7:00 p.m., as well as Saturday mornings until noon. Children were provided two full meals a day, i.e., dinner at noon and supper at five, plus a morning snack. The programs closely followed those developed by the *Institute of Child Study*, as great emphasis was placed on both vigorous outdoor play and indoor play which was quieter and focussed on developing the children's creativity. During the routine periods for sleeping and eating, the children were taught to follow good procedures and were encouraged to develop independence. While some of the day nurseries were set up in private houses, in most cases they are situated in churches or community halls (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1976; Pierson, 1986).

Beith (1943) explains that due to the quality of care the wartime day nurseries provided, and the tremendous assistance they were to working mothers, many social observers, including health and social workers, hoped that the day nurseries would carry over into peacetime

for the promotion of children's health and well-being. Many felt that nursery schools "should be recognized as an educational necessity for the so-called pre-school child" (p. 9).

At the end of the war in May 1945, there was a total of 28 day nurseries in Ontario and 42 day care centres (note: both of these were considered child care services. Day nurseries cared for preschoolers under the age of five years and daycare centres cared for children over the age of five) (Prentice, 1995).

The federal government, despite a 1944 commitment to the public that the primary focus of postwar domestic policy would be on social security and human welfare, moved to end its involvement with child care following the end of the war. In the fall of 1945, Deputy Minister of Labour Robert MacNamara wrote to the Ontario minister of Public Welfare, William Goodfellow, and reported that the withdrawal of federal support for child care was imminent (Prentice, 1995).

This news fomented spirited protests in both Quebec and Ontario. In Quebec, mothers of children attending the first wartime day nursery established in Montreal drafted a letter urging the government to continue the day nurseries after the war, and appeals were also made by the Montreal Council of Social Agencies, the Federation of Catholic Charities, and the Montreal Association of Protestant Women Teachers (Pierson, 1986).

The main reason why many in Quebec protested the proposed closures was that the mothers who placed their children in the nurseries were working out of economic necessity due to marital breakdown, or the death, war injuries, sickness or inadequate incomes of their husbands. The mothers argued that the day nurseries relieved their anxiety over

the well-being of their children while they went to work (Pierson, 1986).

As for Ontario, surveys conducted in its largest city of Toronto indicated that the mothers using child care facilities were in desperate need for the continuance of full-time day care. Approximately 50 percent of the women were working full-time out of economic need; some were widows with little or no pensions, others were unmarried mothers, and still others had husbands who were unemployed, ill, or earning inadequate wages. Another 30 percent of the mothers were working full-time to help husbands pay off debts, purchase homes, or get re-established in business, and 15 percent were working part time to supplement family incomes. In 5 percent of the cases husbands had been apprehended from their homes due to poor conduct (Pierson, 1986).

Despite spirited pleas in both provinces to keep the child care centres open, the federal government announced its intention to abrogate its cost-sharing agreement with Ontario and Quebec on April 1, 1946, citing the need for fiscal restraint (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1976; Prentice, 1995).

Incessant lobbying by Ontario's Day Nurseries and Day Care Parents Association did influence the Ontario provincial government, however, as indicated by the province's passage on March 22, 1946 of the *Day Nurseries Act*. The act, effective June 30, 1946, provided for joint cost-sharing between municipal and provincial governments for child care services. By late 1951, however, the Toronto City Council and the provincial Ministry of Public Welfare had closed down over half the nurseries and daycare centres. The once strong Day Nurseries and Day

Care Parents Associations had dissolved. Child care, which had been defended by its advocates as a support to families and as a means of preventing juvenile delinquency, was reframed by many as a communist threat and as evidence of neglectful mothers (Prentice, 1995).

As for the economic rationale behind the closure of child care centres, particularly the ones funded by the federal government, Schulz (1978) states that

it suited the government's economic purposes to withdraw day care support when World War II ended. People felt enormous concern that the unemployment of the 1930s not be repeated. The release of thousands of young men from the army, combined with the shutdown of the arms industries, seemed ominous. The government undertook a number of measures to avoid mass unemployment: cash gratuities to veterans to stimulate consumer goods industries; home-purchase loans to stimulate the construction industry; educational opportunities to keep soldiers out of the job market; and, almost inevitably, a campaign to get women back into the home. Part of that campaign included closing the war-time nurseries (p. 152).

In order to more fully understand how the closure of federally funded child care centres served to usher employed women back into the domestic sphere, and the implications this had in shaping the Canadian welfare state, it is necessary to juxtapose the abrogation of the *Dominion-Provincial Day Nurseries Act* with the introduction of the family allowance program.

#### 2.4 The family allowance/child care "link".

Not only was there a significant increase in the number of women participating in the labour force during the war years, but conspicuous changes in the types of work they did occurred as well. McWilliams (1944) reports that in their contribution towards the production of munitions, women established themselves in previously uncharted (for

them) vocations such as engineering and metalwork. This led McWilliams to state that many women

are no longer only members of a pool of unskilled labour from which employers may draw workers when needed more or less reluctantly. They come with proved skills in their hands - with capacities that have added to the success of the business and industrial worlds. Out of the very fact that women have so largely proven to be desirable workers will come, whatever conditions require new workers, a willingness on the part of employers not felt before to try women in other and to them still unconquered fields. If recollection serves correctly after the last war employers parted without regret from their women workers. After this war though they may feel obliged to part with them, they will do so with reluctance and will seek to re-employ them as soon as opportunity offers (p. 5).

As explained in the previous section, there was considerable protest and resistance by the public when it heard of the government's plan to close the wartime day nurseries. Prior to their closure, there were conflicting opinions regarding the suitability of the day nurseries for postwar Canada within political circles. Excerpts from a House of Commons parliamentary debate on July 1, 1943 between various Ministers of Parliament on the subject of war appropriation, as found in the Canadian *Hansard*, captures the different ways the idea of postwar child care services was framed by some of Canada's political leaders.

Mr. Humphrey Mitchell, who was the Minister of Labour, opened the debate by stating that

there is undoubtedly division of opinion in Canada on the subject of mothers of young children working in industry, I think it is fair to say that the majority opinion tends to favour mothers remaining in the home rather than working, where at all possible, and the mothers' allowance acts of the various provinces have been designed with this objective in view (p. 4234).

A rejoinder to Mr. Mitchell was issued by Mrs. Nielsen,

MP for the North Battleford, Saskatchewan riding. Mrs.

Nielsen, in contesting the notion that day nurseries were a temporary war measure only, proposed that

this is an incorrect premise upon which to build a scheme of this kind. The emancipation of women as wage-earners has come to stay. It is not just a temporary war measure. I feel I am speaking the views of every Canadian woman when I say that the women of Canada do not want, after the war is over, any suggestion that the only place fit for them is the home. The old slogan which was trotted out before the women of Germany, that the only things that they were fit for were kirchen, kuchen, kindern, is not applicable to the women of a democracy, and women will not be content to work only within the limits of their homes. They realize that the fullest and widest extension of democracy is necessary that they shall be able to take their place in full equality with men in the whole social and economic structure of this country...The day nurseries which have been started during the war were started, of course, as a war-time emergency, but the need for day nurseries was felt long before the war started and will continue and grow after the war is over. Among the low income groups, mothers have for a good many years been forced to work, and the need they have for care of their children has always been great...Among the higher income groups, too, I would say that there has also been a need, and still is and always will be, for nurseries to take care of children...There may be some people who would say: why should the state provide pre-school nurseries for children in the higher income group so that mothers may be able to spend more time at bridge, perhaps? But my concern is not with the mothers so much as to help the children who need the benefit in their earlier years of training in social consciousness to make them better members of society (pp. 4236-37).

As the debate continued, much of the discussion centered on substantive elements of the wartime day nurseries policy, such as the suitability of the buildings used for child care services and the costs involved to finance the scheme. The latter part of the debate consisted mostly of differing opinions on the rectitude of women working outside of the home and state provision of child care services. Mr. Daniel McIvor of Fort William, British Columbia, proclaimed that the

care of children in this way is not new; I can remember



thirty-five years ago when these clinics were established in Toronto. I would warn the Minister of Labour, however, that no one can take care of a child like that child's mother, and I hope the day may come when mothers may be provided with sufficient of this world's goods that they may be able to remain at home and take care of their children. Those who understand something of the causes of divorce realize that children are an extremely fine tie in the home, and when we delegate the care of children to a nurse, no matter how fine and Christian a woman she may be, she cannot take the place of the mother. When children have to be cared for outside the home, whatever the reason, to me it is a sign of the breakdown of the home...It is a case of necessity, of course, in connection with war work, and I know some mothers are quite willing to go out and work so that they may not have to live in straitened circumstances. I just give this warning, and I am sure the Minister of Pensions and National Health also will keep this in mind (p. 4246).

Mr. Angus MacInnis of Vancouver (East) gainsaid the position proposed by Mr. McIvor by citing the paucity of adequate child care services in his riding, and the need for society to ensure that its children were adequately cared for, whether in the home with their mothers or in day nurseries:

For some twenty to twenty-five years in the city of Vancouver we have had day nurseries, though we called them creches, to look after the children of women who had to go out and work. The provision made was very inadequate, but they did fulfill a great need; and I am quite satisfied that when this war is over, unless we improve conditions much quicker than I expect them to be improved, we shall have to continue these day nurseries. Whether or not the home is the best place for the child and the mother is the best person to look after the child depends altogether upon the home and the mother. I have seen mothers who were not fit to look after their children; and until all mothers are educated to look properly after their children and then are provided with sufficient means to do so, other ways will have to be found in order that the children may be saved and that the community may be spared the expense that inevitably it will be put to unless we provide for the proper bringing up of the children while there is yet time (p. 4246).

It should be noted that in his plea for a collective effort to ensure the well-being of children, Mr. McIvor failed to acknowledge the influence fathers have in determining whether or not a home is a place

that either nurtures or stultifies the development of the children that reside there.

As the debate came to a close, Mr. Reid, MP for New Westminster, spoke disparagingly about the prospect of continuing with child care services after the war, and stated that the extent to which the post-war Canadian welfare state should intervene in family life is to ensure that women and families had the proper resources to care for their children:

I listened to the speech of the hon. member for North Battleford, and I rather thought she was advancing an idea which was new to this country but which has been tried in other countries, namely, the idea of collectivism in the bringing up of our children. I hope the minister was not too much impressed with that idea because...I am told that in many cities the juvenile delinquency, pertaining to children of mothers who have gone out to work, is alarming. I should hope that aspect has not been lost sight in any scheme of this kind. I am one who hopes that this vote may not be necessary after the war, and that we shall make conditions such that the women of the land will be able to stay in their homes (pp. 4246-47).

These excerpts from the July 1, 1943 parliamentary debate on the wartime day nurseries and the prospect of their continuance into the postwar era convey the considerable level of conflict and differing opinions which surrounded the program. Only Mrs. Nielsen from North Battleford seemed to express genuine ardor for the idea of maintaining child care services following the war's end, as she cited the right of women to participate freely in the labour market as well as the benefits to children as the reasons why the day nurseries should remain open. While Mr. MacInnes framed child care services as at least an interim measure to ensure children were adequately cared for, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. McIvor, and Mr. Reid were all staunchly opposed to retaining the day nurseries following war's end, basing their opinions

on their preference for the male breadwinner/female homemaker family model (Eichler, 1997).

In their comments all three MP's articulated the need for women to have access to adequate resources so they could live out what the three men considered to be a woman's proper station in life, i.e., to remain in the private sphere. Mr. Mitchell acknowledged that the intention behind the pre-World War II Mothers' Allowances Act was to keep women with children in the home and out of the work force which, according to him, was the familial structure endorsed by the majority of the population.

Along with the aforementioned discontinuance of federal funding for child care services in 1946, the federal government amended its income tax structure, effective January 1, 1947, to facilitate the return of married women to the private domain. Once a wife's income exceeded \$250, the married status tax exemption of her husband would be reduced by the amount that her income exceeded \$250. This introduced a work disincentive for married women that was more fiscally penalizing than the tax structure of the Depression years (Pierson, 1986).

Consequently, fruitpacking and canning firms complained bitterly about the new tax measure, reporting that their most skilled female packers and sorters were quitting once their earnings reached \$250. Concomitantly, textile firms voiced their unhappiness with losing their most experienced power sewing machine operators, silk cutters, winders and carters. While the Deputy Minister of Labour Arthur MacNamara denied that his department had intended the tax change to drive women out of the labour force, a spokesperson for the Primary Textile Institute in Toronto reasoned that since the 1942 revision to the tax

system provided an incentive for married women to enter the labour force, the 1947 revision acted equally as a work disincentive (Pierson, 1986).

Another barrier to women's employment in the postwar reconstruction era was the *Re-instatement in Civil Employment Act* of 1942, which guaranteed that ex-service personnel be given back their pre-enlistment jobs. While this may seem innocuous enough, one stipulation was that women who had worked in non-traditional employment replacing men could not make any claim to employment or further training in those occupations. Those women desiring paid employment were instead offered training in low-paying, traditional occupations such as hairdressing and dressmaking. Furthermore, in 1945 the King administration renewed the enforcement of the civil service regulations which barred married women from working for the federal government (Ursel, 1992).

Did the majority of married women who worked during the war years wish to remain in the labour market or return to their previous vocations as full-time homemakers? There are varying answers to this. Pierson (1986) notes that the

Wartime Information Board based its "full employment campaign" largely on the expectation "that a good many women in the Services and in civilian jobs are looking forward to changing their tunics and overalls for aprons, as soon as the woman-power shortage is over" (p. 79).

On the other hand, as noted earlier, many Canadian families were impoverished during and immediately following the war era, and this economic reality instilled a desire in many working women to remain in the labour force. In a September 1945 survey of 542 working mothers, 484 indicated that they planned on working indefinitely, and that 445 said their primary motivator for this was economic (Schulz, 1978). In

all likelihood, some women probably looked forward to returning to their previous roles as homemakers, others wanted to continue working not for pleasure or self-fulfillment but out of economy necessity, and still others, encouraged by their acquisition of new skills during the war years, wished to not only remain but to prosper in the public sphere.

However, when one considers such occurrences as the aforementioned termination of federally-funded child care services, the changes in the postwar income tax structure, the opinions of leading politicians (including the Minister of Labour) concerning the wartime day nurseries, and the passage of key labour legislation, it is evident that one of the various and often conflicting social forces that served to shape and form the incipient postwar Keynesian welfare state was the ideological belief that the proper role for married women with children was to reside within the domestic sphere (or if they were in the public domain, they should be steered towards low-wage service positions). This was legitimized through the introduction of the family allowance program, which "encouraged women to return to their traditional, domestic role, and softened the economic effects of doing so" (Schulz, 1978, p. 153).

The costs to the federal government for financing the family allowance program were considerable. When cheques were first issued to the main caregiver in families (usually the mother), monthly expenditures for the program averaged about \$20,000,000. At the time of its inception, the Canadian scheme was the most generous family allowance in the world. The cost of the program was nearly as much as the total national expenditures (federal, provincial, and municipal

governments) on public health and welfare services at the end of the 1930s, and equivalent to more than a third of all prewar federal expenditures (Baker, 1995; Cassidy, 1945).

The federal government's decision to withdraw funding from child care services following the war, and to instead institute its family policy largely through the introduction of family allowances, profoundly shaped the nature of the Canadian welfare state. This is because many Canadian women who had been active in the labour market by accessing child care services were no longer able to do so, and, consequently, were ushered back into the private sphere.

One example of a logical inconsistency regarding the provision of resources which arose during the midst of the child care/family allowance program shift was the issue of children's access to milk. During the 1920s, the federal government began to publish materials on how to best enhance the health of children. For example, the Department of Health distributed the *Blue Books*. These publications, focussed on, among other things, the need for children to drink lots of milk. Many parents stated they could not afford to buy their children copious amounts of milk, however, and when the family allowance program was introduced one of the benefits touted by its proponents was that now parents could afford to buy their children adequate amounts of milk.

In their efforts to maintain child care funding from provincial and municipal governments after the termination of federal dollars, proponents of child care in Toronto associated as interdependent the issues of child care, rising prices, housing, and the cost of living. Their efforts to link these issues converged most conspicuously on the

issue of hot lunches and free milk for school children. Thus, their advocacy efforts surrounding child care and school feeding, including free milk, became intertwined (Prentice, 1995).

By late 1947, trustees of the Board of Education in Toronto were increasingly hostile to the notion of child care and, though to a lesser degree, the distribution of free milk for children that was linked to it. One trustee argued that providing free milk would cause a loss of initiative in children and that it would do more harm than good because children should be encouraged to get what they want by themselves (Prentice, 1995).

Thus, the logical inconsistency which arose regarding the distribution of milk to children depending upon whether one was arguing in favour of family allowances or against child care indicates that factors other than the well-being of children heated the debate. One of these factors was a patriarchal bias as to how a family should be constructed (i.e., the male breadwinner/female homemaker model) (Eichler, 1997).

The legacy of the decisions made in the mid-1940s can still be detected in the structure of family policies found in the contemporary Canadian welfare state. For example, in its budget for the year 2000, the federal government stated that it was intending to distribute \$850 million more each year to the *National Child Benefit* (NCB), which is the federal-provincial program that is geared towards assisting children in low-income families (it is the program which replaced the family allowance). Ottawa's contribution to the NCB is expected to reach \$2.5 billion by the year 2004 (Leblanc, 2000b).

While the benefits allotted to Canadian families through the NCB

are helpful, Judy Darcy of the Canadian Union of Public Employees explains that changes to the NCB did not create a single child care space in Canada. This, she notes, contravenes an earlier election promise by the federal Liberal government that it would create more child care spaces (Leblanc, 2000a).

Thus, it is apparent that the decision made by the King government nearly 55 years ago to introduce the family allowance program and to withdraw funding for child care shortly thereafter shaped the direction and structure of the Canadian welfare state in a manner that is still evident, i.e., a family policy framework which emphasizes the direct enhancement of parent's discretionary income rather than a comprehensive child care system (Boismenu and Jenson, 1998). This will become more evident in the next chapter, which explores the current status of child care in Canada.



### CHAPTER 3 - CHILD CARE IN CANADA: THE CURRENT CONTEXT

#### *3.1 The return of federally-funded child care services.*

Following the end of the second World War, Canada, like much of the industrialized world, enjoyed over two decades of steady economic growth. Concomitantly, the range of social programs available to Canadians broadened considerably and, by the 1960s and early 1970s, virtually all Canadians were covered under the service umbrella of health, unemployment, and retirement insurance. Moreover, there were greatly expanded opportunities to attend post-secondary educational institutes (Held, 1989; Kitchen, 1995).

In 1966, the *Canada Assistance Plan* (CAP) was introduced, which provided the legislative justification for the federal government's fiscal contributions to a vast array of social programs, including provincial mothers' allowance schemes, health services to public assistance recipients, and costs related to nursing home care (Dyck, 1995; Guest, 1997).

Another development in the Canadian welfare state that accompanied the passage of CAP was the reappearance of federally-funded child care services (Friendly, 2000). Through CAP, the federal government reimbursed provinces for up to 50 percent of their CAP-eligible social services and social assistance payments regardless of the amount of their initial expenditures. In the area of child care, cost sharing under CAP covered fee subsidies for low-income parents who were deemed eligible for financial need on the basis of either a needs or income test, as well as operating grants for regulated non-profit or government-operated child care facilities (Doherty et al., 1998).

Since social services (including child care) fall under provincial jurisdiction, the provinces were not compelled to participate in CAP. Nevertheless, all of the provinces came to use the child care provisions under CAP, though it took more than a decade for them all to participate. Thus, during the 1970s and 1980s CAP provisions prompted the development of child care services throughout Canada, albeit in a targeted rather than a universal sense. Other noteworthy developments in Canadian family policy occurred in 1971, when parental out-of-pocket child care expenses were allowed as tax deductions under the *Income Tax Act*, and maternity benefits were included under *The Unemployment Insurance Act* ("The federal role," 1998).

Despite the reappearance of the federal government in providing provisions for child care, many social commentators objected to the residual manner in which child care services were being delivered. One of the major targets of criticism was the fact that child care funds were geared towards low-income families only, with little recognition of child care being a form of early childhood education and/or a requirement for working parents. Some of the other criticisms were that poorer provinces had little initial funds to spend on child care services, that eligibility standards for subsidies were too strict, and that subsidized and regulated child care services were too costly and in short supply. Consequently, many parents relied on unregulated sitters to care for their children (Baker, 1997).

Just as conflict theory increases our understanding of the introduction of the family allowance program and the rise and fall of federally-funded child care services during the 1940s (see Chapter 2), it also has heuristic value when applied to the residual model of child

care services which developed under CAP.

Conflict theory maintains that the accumulation role of the state is unstable, as economic growth is constantly disrupted by crises. One such crisis began in the early 1970s, and was exacerbated by a five-fold increase in oil prices imposed by the *Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries* (OPEC) in 1973. This precipitated a severe economic slump throughout the western industrialized world, as the so-called "major" OECD countries (including Canada) faced sharp increases in both unemployment and inflation (Amin, 1980; Held, 1989; Pierson, 1998).

This economic crisis sparked a paradigmatic shift in macroeconomic theory, as Keynesianism was displaced by monetarism. It also marked the beginning of neo-liberal social policy, whose proponents advance against the Keynesian liberalism that characterized the birth and development of the modern welfare state, and instead adhere to a market-driven, *laissez-faire* policy model that is reminiscent of classical liberalism. Hence, most social observers are in agreement that, by the mid-1970s, the "golden-age" of the Canadian welfare state, whose origins lie in the mid-1940s and the introduction of the family allowance program, started to decline. Thus, it is not surprising that the child care services that developed in Canada during the 1970s and beyond have been residual in nature (Armitage, 1996; Broad and Antony, 1999; Brodie, 1999; Browne, 1999; Guest, 1997).

Child care did not become highly visible on the national political scene until the early 1980s. It was highlighted in the televised party leader's debate during the 1984 election, when all three party leaders promised to improve child care services in Canada if they were elected

(Doherty et al., 1998).

The first national committee to undertake a thorough study of child care was the *Task Force on Child Care*, established in 1984 by the federal Liberal government just prior to the election. A new Conservative government was formed shortly thereafter, but the task force established by the previous Liberal regime was permitted to continue its work. According to Lind and Prentice (1992), the Task Force child care proposals were progressive in nature, as a series of recommendations were laid out that moved in stages and culminated in the emergence of a comprehensive child care and parental-leave system by 2001.

Indicative of the conflict that occurs in policy development, the reigning Conservative Party responded with a report from their own parliamentary committee, entitled *Special Committee on Child Care*. The committee's final report reflected the decline of the Keynesian welfare state in Canada. It was supply-side oriented, as it proposed enhanced tax breaks to parents, support of for-profit, commercial child care centres, and the continuation of limited subsidies (Friendly and Oloman, 1996).

In the summer of 1988 the Conservative government tabled legislation for a national child care program that was based largely on the report issued by the *Special Committee on Child Care*. If proclaimed, the *Canada Child Care Act* would have removed child care funding provisions from CAP and established a new funding arrangement in which more money would have initially been allotted to the provinces (i.e., a block fund of \$4 billion over 7 years to assist in the creation of 200,000 new child care spaces) with the condition of a

spending ceiling placed on federal contributions. Many child care proponents denounced the proposed legislation for its retreat from CAP's open-ended cost sharing, the commitment of federal funds for only seven years, and the absence of national standards or principles (Lind and Prentice, 1992; Friendly and Oloman, 1996; Baker, 1997; Doherty et al., 1998).

The proposed *Canada Child Care Act* was enveloped with the conflict inherent to political strategy. Baker (1997) explains that although early in 1988 the Conservatives held the majority of seats in the House of Commons, the Liberals had most of the seats in the Senate. Both the Conservative government and many citizens criticized the Senate as being costly and superfluous (this criticism is still widely heard today), and the Conservatives argued that the non-elected Liberal senators were stalling the proposed *Canada Child Care Act* and preventing the government from creating a national child care program. Shortly thereafter, an election was called which automatically removed the bill from further consideration.

Following the 1988 federal election, the re-elected Conservative government did not reintroduce any legislation analogous to the *Canada Child Care Act*, causing many to question the sincerity of the government's ostensive interest in expanding child care services prior to the election. Consequently, the hopes of those vying for a national child care program began to dwindle (Friendly and Oloman, 1996; Doherty et al., 1998).

Child care reappeared as an important issue during the 1993 federal election campaign, however, with the Liberals and New Democrats identifying its potential to strengthen the economy by supporting

parental employment and creating jobs. Outlined in their election document entitled the *Red Book*, the Liberals promised to increase the number of regulated child care spaces across Canada and support a principle of basing costs for service on parents' ability to pay. Hence, the *Red Book* promises seemed to presage an improved child care scenario in Canada and, when the Liberals won the federal election, child care advocates anticipated meaningful improvements in child care policy (Friendly and Oloman, 1996; Doherty et al., 1998).

However, just as the previous Conservative government reneged on its promise to substantially boost child care services in Canada, so did the Liberals. Citing a forecast deficit for 1994-95 of \$39.7 billion with a net public debt/GDP ration of 71.6 percent, the Liberal government announced a need to reduce, rather than increase, the number of social programs available to Canadian families (Prince, 1998).

While excessive social expenditures are often cited as the primary cause of Canada's massive debt, this is gainsaid by Stanford (1995), as well as Cameron and Finn (1996), who convincingly argue that rising interest rates set at the discretion of international lending agencies is the real culprit to blame for Canada's fiscal woes.

Conflict theory proposes that those who achieve power within society seek to maintain it (see Chapter 1), however, and this principle certainly rings true for the Canadian social policy landscape, as the shift from Keynesianism to neo-liberalism was further entrenched by Finance Minister Paul Martin's announcement of the 1995 federal budget. Referred to by Torjman and Battle (1995) as "the most profound change to social policy since Canada constructed its social security system in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s" (p. 2), this budget

revamped the Canadian welfare state in two significant ways. First, it introduced substantial spending cuts. Second, the federal government announced that it would consolidate all federal transfers to the provinces for health, social services, and post-secondary education into a single block grant, known as the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). This new block-funded arrangement came into effect on April 1, 1996 (Prentice, 1999).

### *3.2 The implications of the CHST for child care.*

Due to its block-funded configuration, the CHST marked the withdrawal of the federal government's role as an active shaper of social programs through its spending power; a role that had been instrumental in formulating and implementing social programs in Canada for over thirty years. Consequently, a new social union emerged, which consisted of the federal government lessening its own hold on social programs and handing over more discretionary power to the provinces and territories (Friendly, 1999; Prentice, 1999). As for child care,

this quite clearly meant the end of the vision of a national child care program like Medicare with national principles, portability among provinces, and federal funding. In the 1995 budget, the child care funds committed in the Red Book, and allocated in the 1994 budget (but not spent) disappeared while the conception of child care within Human Services Development Canada mutated from "lying at the heart...of employment, learning and security" (Human Resources Development Canada, 1994a:1) to become one of the Department's new "employability tools", surrendering the concept of child care as a service related to healthy child development. This shift was significant because it had clear implications for how strategies for child care would be developed (Friendly, 1999, p. 9).

Along with the resultant de-emphasis on child care being a means of educating children and preparing them for the rigours of life, the

inauguration of the CHST precipitated a marked disincentive for the provinces to fund child care services. This is because, in conjunction with the CHST's significant decrease in funding for social programs, its lump-sum funding structure translates into every dollar a province spends on child care costs them a full dollar, whereas under CAP, one dollar of child care spending used to cost the provinces 50 cents. Thus, the fiscal incentives for the provinces to fund child care are reduced (Cleveland and Hyatt, 1998).

In January 1997, the federal and provincial/territorial governments agreed to devise a *National Children's Agenda*, under the guise of promoting the development and well-being of Canadian children. The Agenda is comprised of four separate initiatives, including the *National Child Benefit* (NCB). Due to the considerable breadth of the NCB (it is agreed upon by Ottawa and all of the provinces except for Quebec), it is considered to be the highlight of the Agenda (Beach, 1998; Boismenu and Jenson, 1998; Prentice, 1999).

The NCB, which came into effect on July 1, 1998, is combined with the *Canada Child Tax Benefit* (CCTB) (Battle, 1999; Durst, 1999). The CCTB occurred in two stages. In July 1997 (stage 1 of the CCTB), the earned income supplement, also known as the working income supplement (WIS), was boosted in order to take into account the high number of children residing in low-income working families. Benefits increased from an annual rate of \$500 per family to \$605 for the first child, \$405 for the second, and \$330 for each additional child. In July 1998 (stage 2 of the CCTB), the basic child benefit and the enriched WIS allotments were combined to form the new CCTB, which amounted to \$1,625 per year for the first child and \$1,425 for each additional child



(Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1999).

Battle (1999) states that the federally-funded CCTB provides a stronger and level foundation upon which the provinces can build on in several ways. Provinces...deduct the increases in federal child benefits from welfare payments on behalf of children, but they must reinvest these savings in other programs for low-income families with children, such as income-tested child benefits, wage supplements, in-kind benefits (e.g., supplementary health care) and social services (e.g., child care). Together, the Canada Child Tax Benefit and the provincial reinvestments...constitute the National Child Benefit...(p. 41).

There are two points from this excerpt which must be qualified.

First, the provinces/territories decrease their social assistance payments by no more than what is allocated to families on social assistance through the NCB. Thus, the total benefit available to families on social assistance remains at least the same as before the NCB (Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1999). Second, the federal government has not provided any guidelines as to how the provinces must reinvest the money they save from their reduced social assistance expenditures. Hence, they may increase funding for regulated child care spaces, but they can also provide more market-oriented choices such as greater tax credits or for-profit and non-regulated child care (Boismenu and Jenson, 1998). Consequently, Doherty et al. (1998) cogently remark that, following the passage of the CHST, "child care was off the federal government's agenda. Instead, the federal and provincial governments focussed their energy on an income security program, the new National Child Benefit" (p. 42).

This observation by Doherty et al. (1998) supports what this writer proposed at the conclusion of Chapter 2, i.e., that the decision made approximately 55 years ago by the federal government to introduce

family allowances, and then terminate funding for child care services shortly thereafter, markedly and distinctly shaped the nature and direction of Canadian family policy. This is because the NCB, like its predecessor the family allowance, is primarily a cash benefit (although it does contain some targeted in-kind benefits that were never part of the family allowance program), while existing regulated child care is essentially a residual and ad hoc service in Canada. While cash benefits purportedly "give the beneficiary freedom to choose, to enter the market to purchase goods and services" (Moroney and Krysik, 1998, p. 39), this writer argues that, in the case of Canada, where the NCB and the attendant paucity of regulated, affordable, child care services form the bulk of the nation's family policy, the opposite actually occurs, i.e., the freedom of individuals, particularly women, to obtain steady employment and thus fully participate in the market and public sphere is often compromised. This will become more apparent in the following section.

### *3.3 The current context of child care in Canada.*

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, most young children were cared for in their homes, usually by their mothers. For example, in 1967 only 17 percent of mothers with preschool children were employed outside the home (Prentice, 1999). Since then, however, there has been a rising participation rate of mothers with young children participating in the labour force (Beach, 1998; Browne, 1999). For example, in 1998, 64 percent of Canadian mothers with a youngest child of less than three years-old participated in the labour force, and this rose to 70 percent for those with a youngest child of three to five years-old ("Statistics

Summary," 2000). Economists from Statistics Canada project that the labour force participation rate of women aged 15 to 44 will increase from the current rate of over 70 percent to about 80 percent by the year 2011. Consequently, the demand for child care services to meet the labour force participation needs of women and families is expected to continue to grow steadily (Beach, 1998).

Despite the growing demand, Canada does not have a coherent child care system. Unlike many other affluent, industrialized nations, Canada has not taken a proactive or even a facilitative approach to developing a system of high-quality child care services ("Early childhood care and education," 2000). Instead, child care in Canada today "is as characterized by inadequacy, fragmentation, and incoherence as it was two decades ago" (Friendly, 1999, p. 2).

There are three main trends characterizing the current child care landscape in Canada. First, recent (1998) data suggests that the development of child care services was static (at best) or lost ground throughout the 1990s. Second, despite the fact that the overall child care situation was static or declined during the 1990s, the decade was marked by ever-increasing levels of divergence among the provinces in regards to their child care policies, funding, and services. This has resulted in the current situation of widespread incongruity among child care services across the country. Finally, the number of Canadian children aged zero to five is decreasing, in absolute terms, in almost every province. This suggests that now is the time for governments to develop more comprehensive child care services while the population of children is relatively low ("Early childhood care and education," 2000). These three trends will now be further substantiated and

elaborated upon.

### *3.3.1 Stagnation and decline.*

While the number of regulated child care spaces across Canada for children aged twelve and under increased from 371,573 in 1992 to 516,734 in 1998; an increase of about 145,000 ("Statistics Summary," 2000), the majority of increases took place in Quebec. In six of the other provinces/territories, the increases were very small; no more than a few hundred spaces in several jurisdictions. In two other provinces, the number of regulated child care spaces decreased ("Early childhood care and education," 2000).

The percentage of children aged twelve and under for whom there was no child care space decreased only slightly during the decade, ranging from 92.5 percent in 1992 to 90 percent in 1998 ("Statistics Summary," 2000). In 1998, there were still six provinces that provided regulated child care for less than ten percent of their children; for two it was 5 percent or less. At the current rate of increase of regulated child care spaces across Canada, it will take more than 100 years to provide enough child care spaces for even 50 percent of children aged twelve and under. As noted in Chapter 1, this is in stark contrast to western Europe, where almost all three year-olds attend some type of regulated child care ("Early childhood care and education," 2000).

### *3.3.2 Greater provincial disparity.*

Every aspect of child care varies widely across Canada's provinces and territories, i.e., the range of services offered, eligibility, funding, statutory requirements for their provision, monitoring, and

enforcement of standards (Friendly, 1999). For example, in Newfoundland no infant can attend a group daycare centre since the province does not permit centres to accept children under the age of two. In Alberta, no school-age child care services are regulated. While one in seven of PEI's children has access to a regulated child care space, in Saskatchewan the ratio is one in 27. Although low-income families throughout Canada still qualify for fee subsidies for child care services, provincial/territorial discretion allows for their subsidy cutoffs to be set at low levels. For example, in Manitoba a sole-support parent with one infant is required to pay the full fee of as much as \$6,500 a year (or more) if her income exceeds \$24,369 (Prentice, 1999).

The amount parents have to pay for regulated child care centres also varies greatly. For example, in Ontario the median monthly parent fees for full-time, centre-based child care for infants aged 0 to 17 months in 1998 was \$783, whereas in New Brunswick similar services cost parents \$360 ("Statistics Summary," 2000).

Although most of the revenue needed to finance regulated child care centres is generated through parent fees, fee subsidies and other government grants, the average percentage of revenue from these sources allocated to regulated child care services differs widely among the provinces. For example, in 1998 the percentage of revenue from parent fees ranged from 33.9 in one province to a high of 82.1 in another, while revenue obtained through fee subsidies varied from 14.4 percent to 40.3 percent ("Early childhood care and education," 2000).

In this midst of incongruity among the provinces, Quebec has developed what is by far the most comprehensive child care system in

Canada. Since September 1997, parents of four year-olds have to pay only \$5 a day to send their children to regulated child care centres. In September 1998, this policy was extended to include three year-olds, and in September 1999, two year-olds were included in the scheme. As of September 2000, the \$5 a day program was expanded to include children under two as well (Rebbick, 1997; Picard, 1999).

Parents have their choice of what type of child care service to send their children, i.e., either centre-based (i.e., the traditional daycare centre) or family-based care, which is private, non-profit, in-home care. To participate in the \$5 day a day plan, however, the child care must be regulated. Child care is available to all children, whether their mothers are in the paid workforce or working full time in the home (Rebbick, 1997).

One of the innovative aspects of the Quebec policy is that it established Early Childhood Centres that are not only community based and non-profit, but parent-controlled, as two-thirds of the seats on the Centres' boards of directors must be occupied by parents. The Centres coordinate all child care options in communities delivering both centre-based and family child care and provide free training to unregulated child care providers so that they may become regulated. Given the comprehensiveness, affordability, and quality of the services provided by the Quebec scheme, it is evident that the province has "broken away from the rest of the pack in an integrated coherent programme that applies to everyone" (Rebbick, 1997, p. 1).

### 3.3.3 Decreasing child populations.

Although there were more Canadian children aged zero to 12 in 1998 than in 1995 (5,077,500 to 5,063,694), in 1995 the number of children aged zero to two and three to five exceeded children in the same cohorts in 1998 (in 1995, the number of children aged zero to two was 1,142,482 in comparison to 1,065,100 in 1998, and in 1995 there were 1,202,092 children aged three to five while in 1998 there were 1,180,800) ("Statistics Summary," 2000).

While some may argue that the decreasing number of younger children reduces the pressure on governments and policy makers to develop more comprehensive child care services in Canada ("Early childhood care and education," 1998), this is gainsaid by Foote and Stoffman (1996), who note that as a result of this demographic shift, "a national daycare program, which should be considered a necessity in an advanced, industrialized economy, is now more affordable than it was" (p. 147). The economic feasibility of financing a national child care program is further enhanced when one realizes that, unlike the mid-1990s when the growing demand for universal child care was thwarted by the emphasis on the federal deficit, budgetary "surpluses are more the order of the day" (Friendly, 2000, p. 21).

### 3.4 Child care is more than just "care".

In Section 2.2 the distinction was made between the nursery schools which arose during the 1920s for children from middle-class homes and the daycare or child care centres attended by the children of low-income mothers. While the former focussed on the development and education of children, the latter focussed primarily on their care

(and, as noted, the quality of care in many cases was sorely lacking).

Friendly (2000) notes that today in Canada regulated child care is framed primarily as a means of caring for children while their parents work, study, or prepare to re-enter the workforce. In other words, the notion of child care being a form of early childhood education is not strongly recognized.

There is an emerging school of thought, however, which recognizes that child care services can provide care for young children while at the same time facilitating their acquisition of valuable skills and knowledge. Observation of blended early childhood service models in countries such as Sweden, France, Denmark, and Spain have contributed to the growing understanding and acceptance in Canada, and the United States, that the care and education/development of children are not separate spheres but can be addressed simultaneously (Friendly, 2000). As stated by a spokesperson for UNICEF, there "is a growing emphasis that child care and early childhood education are inseparable" (Bellamy, 1999, p. 71).

As noted above, January 1997 marked the inauguration of the federal government's *National Children's Agenda*. While the NCB is the Agenda initiative that has received the most attention, there were other initiatives that reflect the growing emphasis on the development of children. They include the expansion of the *Aboriginal Head Start* program (which has an early childhood education focus) to reserves across the country, and the establishment of *Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being*, in order to increase understanding of the critical factors for healthy child development (Beach, 1999).

Many researchers and policy analysts in various fields such as



health and medicine, economics, education, and social work have come to support the traditional advocates of child care (i.e., feminist and social justice groups), in arguing that it is necessary for Canada to boost its involvement and investments in child care services. This is largely due to the emerging consensus that a strategy for developing child care programs which offer *both* early childhood education for the development of children, and care to support parents' (often mothers') participation in the labour force, is in the public interest (Friendly, 1999).

It is because of this growing consensus that, despite the fragmentation of services across the country, hope remains for the development of a national child care program in Canada. As noted in Chapter 1, a consideration of some of the evidence that suggests the benefits of a national child care system, as well as a discussion of a possible policy framework, are found in Appendices A and B. At this point, however, it might be helpful to briefly "step outside" the Canadian context and survey some existing child care systems which are much more comprehensive than Canada's. For comparative purposes, Chapter 4 provides a discussion of the child care regimes in Sweden and France, which serve to show that there are historical alternatives to the path taken in Canada.

#### CHAPTER 4 - CHILD CARE IN SWEDEN AND FRANCE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Welfare states may be divided into three categories, or regime-clusters. These clusters are: a) *liberal*; b) *conservative-corporatist*; and c) *social democratic*. *Liberal* regimes, which include Canada, the United States, and Australia, are identified by their means-tested assistance programs and modest universal transfer payments. France, Italy, Germany, and Austria are all *conservative-corporatist* regimes, as they place less emphasis on market efficiency than do *liberal* regimes. Their method of redistributing benefits is mainly horizontal, however, since the majority of their social programs are funded through work-related contributions. A higher level of vertical redistribution is found in the *social democratic* regimes of Sweden and Norway, as their social programs are financed primarily through general revenue. Though taxes in Sweden and Norway are relatively high, full employment policies ensure that only a modest proportion of the population subsist solely off of social transfers, which are often generous and comprehensive (Bonoli, 1997: Burman, 1996; Epsing-Andersen, 1989).

The child care system of one country located within the *liberal* regime-cluster, Canada, has already been discussed in previous chapters. As a means of gaining more understanding of the child care systems found in some other countries, it is useful to select one country from each of the other regime-clusters and analyze their respective child care systems. Hence, the child care systems of Sweden and France form the bulk of analysis in this chapter.

The unique combination of traditions, history, politics, and

economic circumstances all contribute to the formulation of different policy frameworks (including child care policies) that are adopted by various countries. Hence, there are a multitude of reasons as to why the child care systems of Sweden and France, both of which receive international attention due to their high level of quality and comprehensiveness, are more fully developed than Canada's (Cochran, 1993).

For one, both Sweden and France expend a higher percentage of their *Gross Domestic Product* (GDP) on social expenditures than does Canada, so it seems likely that countries who place a higher premium on social welfare programs will have more comprehensive child care systems than those countries who devote less of their resources towards social intervention (Armitage, 1988).

According to Wilensky (1975), the magnitude of welfare states, i.e., the amount of money countries allot towards social programs, depends largely on their level of economic growth. While this explanation provides insight into what dictates the size of a country's welfare state in absolute terms, it offers little explanation why countries whose levels of economic growth are similar often have disparate welfare state regimes.

As discussed in Chapter 1, conflict theory maintains that historical developments within societies arise from complex maneuvers undertaken by separately mobilized interest groups. Cognizant of the conflictual processes that are involved in policy processes and developments, Bonoli (1997) notes that one of the key determinants in the level of social protection granted by a nation's welfare state is the mobilizing capacity of its working class, i.e., the strength and

influence of organized labour.

While capital/labour conflicts certainly played a role in the development of the Canadian welfare state and its family allowance program (see Chapter 2), organized labour was not as significant an influence in shaping public policy in Canada as it was in many European countries (including Sweden and France), however, where class-conscious trade unions have been involved in organizing political parties since the late 19th century. Consequently, the branch of Keynesianism that Canadian policy-makers adopted following World War II was less interventionist than many European nations, which serves to at least partially explain why Canada's welfare state, and child care system, are more residual than the Swedish or French regimes (Jenson, 1989; Wilson, 1979; Wolfe, 1989).

As noted in Chapter 3, the Canadian social landscape is undergoing changes, and among those changes relevant to Canada's child care policy stance are the rising number of women with children participating in the labour force and a growing realization of the potential benefits of child care for children's development. These demographic and attitudinal shifts are fuelling the clamour among many Canadians (see Chapter 1) for a more comprehensive child care system.

Thus, an analysis of countries whose publicly-funded child care systems are more developed than Canada's provides comparative cases showing how historical forces led to policy choices different from those made in Canada, as well as showing the potential for developing a more comprehensive child care system in Canada today.

#### 4.1 Models of child care.

There are three models of child care service delivery which predominate among the industrialized nations. They are the *social welfare*, the *mixed responsibility*, and the *public responsibility* models (Baker, 1995).

The *social welfare* model is characterized by selective and limited government assistance, primarily to low-income families and children. For the overall population, the majority of child care services are provided by family members, neighbours, and private caregivers. Government subsidies and child care regulations are most often established by provincial, state, or local (e.g., municipal) governments. Consequently, the quality and quantity of child care services tend to differ considerably from one jurisdiction to the next, although they are invariably noted for being selective and limited. Countries employing this model are the United States and the United Kingdom. Many child care policy analysts place the Canadian system within this model as well (Baker, 1995).

The *mixed responsibility* model is marked by the provision of child care services through both the private and public sectors. Voluntary organizations, the private sector, and employers may be encouraged to implement services through government-funded capital grants or tax concessions. Parental fees normally vary in accordance with family income, and single-parent and/or low-income families may be given priority for subsidized spaces. For parents who are working or studying full-time, governments employing this model often provide income tax deductions or credits for child care. While Australia's child care policies closely follow the *mixed responsibility* model, the

Canadian system contains elements of it as well, as do some parts of the United States (Baker, 1995).

Some European countries have child care regimes analogous to the *public responsibility* model, in which state-funded child care is considered the right of every family with children, as is elementary education. Preschool child care is seen as a vital element for children's development, and governments operating within this model set high standards to ensure the quality of education and care provided by the child care services. If parents are expected to pay fees, they are charged on a sliding scale which considers a family's income and the number and ages of the children. Two countries whose child care systems adhere closely to the *public responsibility* model are Sweden and France (Baker, 1995).

Along with their focus on children's well-being and development, French and Swedish family policies, of which child care plays a substantial part, reflect a concerted desire to promote maternal employment by assisting mothers in balancing home and family life, as well as increasing fertility rates by reducing the costs of raising children (Hofferth and Deich, 1994).

This is apparent from the results of a recent (1998) study of the family policies of fourteen industrialized nations. In order to determine the countries' levels of support for the employment of mothers, an index was devised which weighed the following family policy indicators: job protection at childbirth, coverage and generosity of maternity leaves, paternity benefits, tax relief for child care, guaranteed child care coverage, and the percentage of children in publicly funded child care. The country with the highest ranking was

France. Denmark was second, while Sweden placed third. Canada, incidentally, placed ninth ("When Mom must work," 1999).

While both Sweden and France are among the world leaders in providing comprehensive child care programs, their two systems do contain differences. This will become more evident in the following sections, which provide analyses of both Swedish and French child care policies and programs.

#### 4.2 Child Care in Sweden.

The origins of the Swedish childcare system can be traced back to the second half of the 19th century. The first day care centre (*barnkrubba*) was opened in 1854 for children of single mothers who, for economic reasons, were required to engage in paid employment. Appearing at about the same time were work shelters (*arbetsstuga*), which took in schoolchildren from low-income families and provided moral training as well as instruction in basic handicrafts. Both of these institutions were run by private citizens and/or charities ("Fact sheets," 1999).

Part-time kindergartens emerged towards the end of the 19th century (about 1890). Based on the ideas of German educator Friedrich Frobel, these kindergartens incorporated a strong pedagogical tradition and were attended mainly by the children of middle- and upper-class families whose mothers were not gainfully employed ("Fact sheets," 1999; OECD Country notes, 1999).

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, Sweden prepared for the postwar era by raising levels of taxation and public expenditure. A series of policy developments occurred after the war, including

pensions and family allowances (Wilson, 1979). Concomitantly, there was a change in societal attitudes towards the private or charitable character of day care centres and work shelters, as many felt that the state should assume more responsibility for the care and training of the country's young children, and that the stigma of poverty associated with the programs should be erased ("Fact sheets," 1999).

This shift in thinking regarding child care was in conjunction with a rising emphasis on gender equality, the labour force participation of women, and declining fertility rates; issues heavily stressed by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal in their influential 1934 publication, *Crisis in the Population Question* (O'Hara, 1998).

According to O' Hara (1998), the influence the Myrdals had on the development of Swedish family policy

cannot be overstated. This was due both to the influence of their innovative ideas and their prominence in the newly elected Social Democratic government, which would remain in power for some 30 years. The Myrdals argued that declining fertility rates were the result of economic factors rather than moral issues, and recommended 'subsidizing the well-being of families so that child bearing would be economically feasible, [arguing] that women would have more children if government programs helped them combine motherhood with employment.' Their ideas about women's right to employment coincided with the commitment of the Social Democrats to social equality and full employment. But 'what made the Myrdals' recommendations so radical was that they were suggesting that Sweden develop a pronatalist policy that made society, rather than individual women, increase their commitment to family life.' Thus, from its origins, Swedish family policy was based on "an acknowledgement of state responsibility in the support of families" (p. 16).

Not surprisingly, the relationship between labour needs and the expansion of child care centres became a policy issue of substantial importance in Sweden during the 1940s. In an official government report in 1943, the importance of greater female participation in the



labour force was mentioned as a significant motive for expanding the production of child care services. The problems for women in combining employment with household work, particularly the care of young children, was further discussed in a 1947 report. This report also emphasized the importance of both genders participating in the labour force, as many felt it was socially disadvantageous for well-educated women, or those with the potential to become well-educated, to reside solely within the private sphere (Dahlstrom, 1997).

During the mid-1940s, government grants were bestowed to both the day care centres, which were renamed day nurseries (*daghem*) and the work shelters, which became known as leisure-time centres (*fritidshem*). The number of children attending these centres was fairly modest, however, as most of the facilities were established in the cities, and Sweden has always been a relatively sparsely populated country ("Fact sheets," 1999; OECD Country Note, 1999).

Furthermore, despite the government's ostensive interest in women's participation in the labour market, in 1950 approximately 50 percent of all Swedish women over 15 were full-time homemakers, a trend which continued throughout the 1950s (Dahlstrom, 1997).

The female labour force participation rate grew steadily throughout the 1960s, however, rising from 36.8 percent in 1960 to 49.7 percent in 1970 (Hofferth and Deich, 1994). Contributing to this demographic shift was Sweden's economic boom during the 1960s, when labour shortages threatened the country's opportunity for continuous economic growth. Sweden first tried to solve this problem through a massive influx of migrant workers, especially from Finland and southern Europe. Nonetheless, a perceived shortage of labour still existed, thus

prompting the government to encourage more women to enter the public realm (Broberg and Hwang, 1991).

Accompanying this era of social change was a growing concern for both the shortage of public child care facilities and the need to protect the well-being of children. For example, a study conducted by the Swedish Parliament in 1962 determined that only about 6 percent of the children of mothers engaged in paid employment attended state-sponsored child care centres (Dahlstrom, 1997; Kamerman, 1991).

In 1968, the Swedish government appointed a special commission, entitled the National Commission on Childcare (*Barnstugeutredningen*), granting it the responsibility to present proposals on how to develop a child care system to properly meet the social, educational and supervisory needs of Swedish children and families ("Fact sheets," 1999).

The report, completed after four years of deliberation, laid the foundation for the Swedish preschool model, i.e., day care centres and playschools were to be combined into a preschool system designed to serve the interests of children as well as to allow parents to work or study. Child care facilities were to be built principally on centre-based models that regarded parent engagement, close relationships between children and teachers, and children's self-esteem and independence as key elements (OECD Country Note, 1999; "Fact sheets," 1999).

As a result of the Commission's report, the *National Preschool Act* was promulgated in 1975, which gave municipal authorities the responsibility for expanding public child care services. These facilities were called *preschools* regardless of whether services were

provided on a full- or part-time basis, and were designed to serve children of mixed age groups, i.e., one to three years and three to six years (OECD Country Note, 1999).

The ideas and programs developed during the early and mid-1970s formed a national strategy to child care in Sweden that has been largely followed in the country ever since. Included in this strategy are several goals which have become the hallmark of Swedish preschools. They include: providing stimulating and developmental activities for children that combine education and care; close co-operation between parents and service providers; service provision for all children, including an emphasis on children in need of special support; service provision intended to support the combination of parental home and work responsibilities; public funding complemented by reasonable parental fees; and local, or municipal, responsibility for implementing programs and services (OECD Country Note, 1999).

Despite the steady increase in child care spaces during the 1970s and early 1980s, the demand for child care spaces exceeded the supply, as the percentage of women gainfully employed rose to 75.4 by 1980 ("Fact sheets," 1999; Hofferth and Deich, 1994). Consequently, in 1985 the Swedish Parliament (*Riksdag*) announced that by no later than 1991 all children from the age of 18 months to when they begin school were to have access to a space in a publicly-funded child care centre ("Fact Sheets," 1999).

Social expenditures came under criticism in Sweden during the early 1990s, however, as the demands of a globalizing economy, an integrating Europe, and a recession took their toll on the government's coffers. Because of fiscal impediments, combined with a rising birth rate and an

ever-increasing number of mothers in the work force, the Swedish government did not reach its alleged goal of providing a child care space for every child in the country by 1991 (Dahlstrom, 1997; "Fact sheets," 1999; Kroger, 1997).

Nonetheless, the government passed legislation in 1995 which required municipalities to provide, without unreasonable delay, child care services for all children between 18 months and six years-old requiring it ("Fact Sheets," 1999; OECD Country Note, 1999; O'Hara, 1998). By 1998, the number of Swedish children attending public child care facilities was over 10 times the amount attending in 1970 (i.e., 720,000 in 1998, in comparison to 71,000 in 1970) (OECD Country Note, 1999).

Paralleling Sweden's expansion in child care coverage was an operationalization of Sweden's long-term philosophic commitment to integrate the care and education of young children. This occurred in 1996, when child care services were transferred from the government's *Ministry of Health and Social Affairs* to the *Ministry of Education and Science*, thus reflecting the growing emphasis on the educational component of child care services (OECD Country Note, 1999).

Few countries place as much emphasis on the quality of their child care services as does Sweden. Standards concerning group size, staff-child ratios, and staff qualifications are rigorously set and enforced, and are based on extensive research. Swedish child care authorities stress sibling (age-integrated) groups (e.g., a two year-old may be placed in the same group as a five year-old), which contrast with the age-segregated groups that exist in the preschool programs of most other countries. It should be noted, however, that age-appropriate and

learning-based activities for the children are incorporated into the programs' curriculums (Kamerman, 1991).

There are five forms of child care services offered to Swedish families. They are *preschools*, *family day care homes*, *open pre-schools*, *pre-school classes*, and *leisure-time centres* (OECD Country Note, 1999).

The *preschools* offer full-time care for children whose parents work, study, or are deemed to be in need of special support. They are open all year round and daily opening times are varied to fit in with parents' working hours. Approximately 61 percent of all Swedish children aged one to five attend a *preschool* ("Fact sheets," 1999; OECD Country Note, 1999).

*Family day care homes*, attended by about 12 percent of all children aged one to five and about six percent of those aged six, involve childminders providing services to children in their own homes. Children are registered and operating hours are varied to fit with parents' working hours. *Family day care homes* are common in rural areas and small towns ("Fact sheets," 1999; OECD Country Note, 1999).

Also attended by children aged one to five are *open pre-schools*. There are approximately 1,000 such centers, which offer part-time activities for children not enrolled in other services, or they may serve to supplement *family day care homes*. Typically more informal than other programs geared towards children of the same age, *open pre-schools* require children to be accompanied by their parents or another caregiver while partaking in a pedagogical group program. They may also have an explicitly social function and collaborate with other agencies such as child protection services ("Fact sheets," 1999; OECD

Country Note, 1999).

Since 1998, municipalities have been mandated to provide *pre-school classes* as part of the school system. Although children's participation is voluntary, about 91 percent of all six year-olds attend *pre-school class* (essentially all of those who have not begun attending compulsory school). The curriculum for the *pre-school class* is the national curriculum for compulsory schools that has been adjusted for this group ("Fact sheets," 1999; OECD Country Note, 1999).

*Leisure-time centres* are frequented by 56 percent of all children aged six to nine and about seven percent of those aged 10 to 12. They provide a valuable service to parents working or studying full-time, as they are open before and after school, as well as during holidays. *Leisure-time centres* are typically located in school buildings (OECD Country Note, 1999).

Public child care in Sweden is funded primarily through the government and employer payroll taxes, with parental fees covering about 15 percent of the remaining costs. Along with access to public child care services, parents are entitled to one year of parental leave, in which they receive 85 percent of their income for the first 30 days, 75 percent for the next 210 days, and a flat rate thereafter. Other provisions include a universal, non-taxable family allowance, advance maintenance payments to lone parents, and the right for parents to reduce their work day until their child turns eight years-old (O' Hara, 1998).

In terms of family policies, O' Hara (1998) states that Sweden's are both

more comprehensive and more generous than that of most countries.

In a ranking of industrialized countries using an index of average income support to families, Sweden tops the list before housing expenditures are considered, ranking fifth when these are added (p. 16).

About 80 percent of married or cohabited mothers in Sweden engage in paid employment, a rate unsurpassed by any other OECD country (O'Hara, 1998). Not only does Sweden have a high rate of women participating in the labour force, of those in full-time employment, only 8 percent are in what are considered low-paying jobs (low-paying is defined as two-thirds of median earnings for all full-time workers). Sweden's incidence of low paid full-time employment for women, as well as men, is lower than any other OECD country (Canada, incidentally, ranks high in both genders, as 16 percent of the men and 34 percent of the women engaged in full-time employment are low paid) ("When Mom must work," 1999).

Given its comprehensive family policies, including a national child care system, and its labour market policy that contains a reasonable wage-level for most working women, it is not surprising that poverty rates among Swedish families with children are among the lowest in the world. Defining *poor* as being equivalent to a gross income of less than 50 percent of the median gross income for the entire country, Hay (1997) reports that 4.7 percent of all Swedish families with children are poor and 8.3 percent of Swedish lone parent families are poor (in comparison to percentage rates of 17.7 and 48.8 for all Canadian families and lone parent families, respectively).

As discussed in previous chapters, child care services are not just about employment issues and reducing rates of poverty, however. They are also concerned with ensuring the proper development and education of children. France, a country famous for its cuisine, art, and

culture, is also known for viewing children as a social "resource to be cherished, an investment rather than a cost, a long-term commitment supported by broad societal agreement" (Nelson-Horchler, 1990, p. 540). With that, let us turn our attention to child care policies and programs in France.

#### 4.3 *The French model of child care.*

As far back as the Middle Ages, it was a common practice in France for private caregivers of children, or childminders, to look after children. Beginning in the 12<sup>th</sup> century this work was organized by charities, and in 1350 a royal decree fixed the payments for childminders and *recommanderesses*, who acted as intermediaries between childminders and parents (Leprince, 1991).

Children were not considered to have human qualities until they reached the age of six or seven. Until that age they were considered to live precarious, vegetative lives and were regarded with indifference within French society. Parental attachment to their children was attenuated by the uncertainty of child survival and further enervated by the significant death rate of mothers linked to pregnancy and childbirth (Combes, 1993; Leprince, 1991).

A shift in attitudes toward children took place during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however. It marked the Age of Enlightenment, during which French theorists such as Jean Jacques Rousseau stressed the need for educating youth. Rousseau also glorified motherhood and denounced the practice of placing children with childminders. Concomitantly, there was a spate of scientific research committed to finding ways to reduce the large number of deaths occurring among children during the first



year of their lives. Consequently, a number of manuals on child rearing were produced, which combined directives on hygiene with moralizing discourse on how to be a good mother (Combes, 1993; Leprince, 1991).

Industrial development occurred throughout France during the 19th century, bringing many women into the workforce and away from their traditional roles in the home. The first *salle d'asile* (hall of refuge), designed to care for young children of working parents, was opened in 1826 by a charitable organization, and a decree from the *Assistance Publique* in 1829 placed the growing number of these institutions under its authority and granted them subsidies. From 1836, the Ministry of Public Instruction began to take control of them, and in 1881, with the introduction of free primary schooling in France, the *salles d'asile* became known as *écoles maternelles* (nursery schools). Laws governing public education cited the *écoles maternelles* as being the first level of public education (Combe, 1993; LePrince, 1991; McMahan, 1992).

It was also at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the activities of childminders were placed under further scrutiny. For example, a law passed in 1874 required that children under the age of two left with childminders be monitored by public authorities. This was done so as to ensure they were being properly cared for (Leprince, 1991).

Concerns with reducing infant mortality and increasing the birth rate characterized French family policy during the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, legislation was passed in 1945 to ensure that conditions in child care centres were hygienic and fostered children's health (LePrince, 1991).

Reflecting on developments in French family policy during World War II and shortly thereafter, O'Hara (1998) states that

France is most often cited as a country with an "explicit" family policy, which is usually characterized as driven by pronatalist concerns. This focus on pronatalism is particularly reflected in France's "family code,"...which contained numerous provisions aimed at increasing the birth rate (p. 9).

France's pronatalist family policy is exemplified through its family allowance scheme and other bonuses. First established in 1921 through a private centralized fund, family allowance became a universal social program in 1932, and was designed to incrementally supplement parents' incomes each time they had a child. In 1946, family allowance benefits were substantially increased. Other programs introduced the same year were a housing allowance, and the *quotient familial*, which provided tax incentives for families to have more children (Baker, 1995; Hofferth and Deich, 1994). Thus, the French policy mix developed during the postwar reconstruction era gave preferential treatment to a specific family model, i.e., "the family with at least three children with the mother at home" (O'Hara, 1998, p. 9).

Conflicting paradigms highlighted French policy debates during the 1950s. While the pervasive idea of a "proper" family was that of the mother in the home, with the working father supporting his wife and children, labour shortages threatened the growth of France's economy. This resulted in a growing demand for the labour force participation of women (Combes, 1993; Leprince, 1991). Furthermore, secondary and university education became more accessible to women, thus paving the way for what many women hoped to be a fulfilling career outside of the home. Consequently, many women (including mothers) began studying and/or working full-time, which resulted in a reliance upon publicly-

funded child care services (Combes, 1993).

The growing popularity and development of *écoles maternelles* during the 1950s did not diminish in subsequent decades, and they are now the most extensive preschool system in the world (Baker, 1995; Kamerman, 1991). It is largely due to the *écoles maternelles* that France is "often viewed as the prime example of the public responsibility model of child care delivery" (Baker, 1995, p. 210).

Attended by about 95 percent of all French children aged two and one-half to six years-old (although they are noncompulsory), the *écoles maternelles* are free, regardless of the income, citizenship, or background of the children's parents (Doherty et al., 1995; McMahan, 1992; Penn, 1999).

Although children are not taught to read at *écoles maternelles* (this is delayed until children attend *cours préparatoire*, which is equivalent to grade one), the preschools do have a definite educational focus. This focus consists of three principal objectives. They are: a) to help children adjust to the particular customs and rules inherent to a school setting, and show them that this setting offers its own activities and satisfactions that are very different from those found in familial life; b) to help children learn to establish cooperative social relationships with other children; and c) to pique children's interest in a broad spectrum of areas including physical skills, language and communication, artistic production and appreciation, and scientific/technical activities (McMahan, 1992).

The typical *école maternelle* has one class for each age level. Due to the high demand for the preschools, classes are large (the average number of children enrolled per class is close to 28). Each class has

its own teacher, who usually has a teacher's aide to help with dressing and cleaning the children, preparing snacks, etc. Many *écoles maternelles* also have support staff that includes physicians, as well as specialists in psychomotor and cognitive skills. Thus, while many educational psychologists feel that smaller classes and lower child-staff ratios would improve the quality of *écoles maternelles*, they note that the stability gained by paying professional salaries to highly skilled staff is a reasonable trade-off for any problems created by large classes. Furthermore, they argue that the low rates of staff turnover ensure that children and staff become well acquainted (McMahan, 1992).

*Ecoles maternelles* are not the only form of child care in France. For example, there are day care centres, known as *crèches*, which are attended by approximately 25 percent of France's children under the age of three. *Crèches* are publicly funded and operated, and usually are open from eight to twelve hours a day, Monday to Friday. If affiliated with a workplace which involves shift work, the operating hours of *crèches* may be extended (Baker, 1995).

There are various types of *crèches*. The *crèche collective*, or group day care, usually has spaces for thirty to sixty children, and is often affiliated with a workplace. *Mini-crèches* are smaller, averaging about 16 children, and may be part of an apartment or community building. *Crèches parentales* are administered by groups of parents, who take turns as volunteers alongside the professional staff. Parents also play an active role in setting facility policies. Finally, family day care, or *crèche familiale*, is a service held in caregivers' homes for one to three children. It is becoming more popular and less

costly, but not all of these are regulated by the government (Baker, 1995; Combes, 1993).

Along with child care services, the French government provides a mix of income security provisions and labour market policies which help offset the rigorous demands of work and familial life. Included in France's family policy menu is a maternity benefit scheme of 16 weeks at 84 percent of a basic daily wage for the first and second child, and 24 weeks for the third and subsequent children. Up to three years of unpaid parental leave is also offered, as well as family allowances and single-parent allowances (which act as a minimum income). If a woman with three or more children (and at least one under the age of three) wishes to stay home and care for her children, the government may, depending on a family's income, provide a monthly parental education allowance, known as *allocation parentale d'éducation*. This allowance is adjusted annually for changes in the costs of living (Baker, 1995; O'Hara, 1998).

O'Hara (1998) notes that France's family policy system is one of the most coherent and deliberate among the industrialized nations, as well as being one of the most generous. While it was once primarily pronatalist in nature, French family policy now

attempts to retain a neutral policy position with respect to the lifestyles of families, whether in their choice of marital status or employment. Over time it has developed a package of family policy measures that cumulatively, but perhaps not systematically, seeks to support whatever choices families make (p. 11).

Although France's family policy menu supports both gainfully employed mothers (i.e., its comprehensive child care system) and mothers who stay at home (i.e., maternity and unpaid parental leaves,

as well as family allowances), the vast majority elect to work outside of the home. For instance, 68 percent of all married/cohabited French mothers are gainfully employed (O'Hara, 1998).

The labour force participation rate of lone mothers in France is also high. For those aged under 25, 68 percent are employed outside of their homes. As for lone mothers aged 25 or over, 82 percent are active workforce participants (Lefaucher and Martin, 1993).

It should also be noted that of those married/cohabited mothers who are employed, 72 percent work outside of their homes on a full-time basis, whereas in Sweden, which also has a comprehensive child care system, only 53 percent of employed married/cohabiting mothers are considered full-time employees (O' Hara, 1998).

#### *4.4 What implications do the French and Swedish models have for child care in Canada?*

In a discussion on child care that includes international policy comparisons, Lamb (1998) reports there is often a positive association between labour market policies regarding women's participation in the public domain and the comprehensiveness of child care regimes (i.e., a nation that encourages the labour force participation of women is likely to have a comprehensive child care system).

This observation certainly holds true for France and Sweden, two countries that, since the 1950s and 1960s, respectively, have actively encouraged the labour force participation of women by implementing comprehensive child care systems. Canada, on the other hand, as discussed in Chapter 2, implemented a postwar Keynesian welfare state regime that was based on the notion of full employment for men only

(Armstrong and Armstrong, 1975; Armstrong and Armstrong, 1994).

Recalling our discussion in Chapter 3, it was not until the 1970s, which marked the decline of the Keynesian welfare state and the birth of neo-liberalism, that a substantial number of Canadian women began participating in the labour market. Economic factors certainly played a key role in this development, as evinced by the 1975 *National Council of Welfare* study which reported that, "if wives had not held paying jobs, the percentage of poor families in Canada would have been 51 percent higher than it was" (Lind and Prentice, 1991, p. 57).

Thus, as is the case with women in Sweden and France, the majority of women in Canada are currently gainfully employed. Unlike Sweden and France, however, Canada's child care services have never grown in proportion with the increasing number of women who are participating in the labour market. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this can be at least partially ascribed to Canada's adoption of a more conservative branch of Keynesianism than that espoused by many European countries, including Sweden and France, where organized labour has historically played a larger role in influencing the development of public policies.

Consequently, most Canadian families are forced to use unregulated and privately-purchased child care services. This translates into a common scenario of Canadian families facing tremendous pressure in meeting all of their responsibilities, while the quality of nonparental care arrangements that their children receive is often questionable (Friendly, 1994).

The dearth of child care services available to Canadian families is not going unnoticed by the governing political elite. In a letter

written to the premiers of Canada at the recent (2000) annual premiers' conference in Winnipeg, Prime Minister Jean Chretien wrote that, in

addition to health care renewal, governments have also agreed to work together to improve the well-being of Canadian children, by putting in place the investments and plans to help all families ensure that their children grow to be healthy, ready to learn and able to seize opportunities later in life...Ensuring the optimal development of our young children requires an integrated early child development system that provides all families throughout Canada with the information, support and service they need to ensure the best possible outcomes for their children. To this end...I hope we can endorse a shared framework for early childhood development including appropriate indicators of progress which will guide our joint investments ("Letter sent by Prime Minister," 2000).

From this letter, it appears that the growing demand by the Canadian public for more comprehensive child care services is steering the federal government towards the idea of increasing funding for child care provisions. It should be noted, however, that the Prime Minister does not refer to child care services *per se*. Thus, his reference to an "integrated early child development system" is ambiguous and can be interpreted to mean something other than child care (e.g., it may mean more cash benefits to families and/or targeted child care services only).

Another reason that one must exercise caution when interpreting Chretien's letter is, as noted in Chapter 3, many in Canada frame child care services in the custodial sense only, without acknowledging or recognizing their potential for stimulating children's development. Hence, the concerted efforts made by Swedish and French policymakers to ensure that the nonparental care arrangements offered in their respective countries are of a high-quality, and which maximize the chances for children to realize their full potential, serve as guides



when proposing alternative strategies to better serve the needs of Canadian children and families.

Research findings suggesting the benefits a comprehensive child care system might have for Canada are found in Appendix A, and a series of policy recommendations on what such a system could look like constitutes Appendix B. Chapter 5 marks the conclusion of the thesis with a discussion on the role social workers can play in developing more comprehensive child care services in Canada.

## CHAPTER 5 - THE CHALLENGE FACING SOCIAL WORK

### *5.1 Thesis summary.*

As outlined in Chapter 1 and elaborated on in later chapters, the social problem of main concern in this thesis is that, unlike many European countries of similar affluence, Canada has no national child care policy designed to meet the needs of families and children across the country.

Chapter 2 explored the origin of this policy gap with a systematic analysis of the dynamics that prompted the birth and development of the Canadian welfare state, including a particular focus on the country's first universal social security measure, the family allowance program.

There is an abundance of literature regarding the emergence and development of family allowances, and Chapter 2 includes a detailed discussion of the three most prominent arguments which account for the scheme's inception. These arguments are: a) the response of a socially conscious government to the poor health and lack of resources afflicting many Canadians; b) a means for the state to assuage capital/labour conflicts and offset labour's demands for higher wages while concomitantly lowering the risk of rapid rises in inflation; and c) an embodiment of Keynesian macroeconomic theory which proposes that economic growth requires active government intervention in order to maintain consumer demand.

Noticeably absent in the literature, however, is a consideration of the relationship between the introduction of family allowances and the development and subsequent withdrawal of federally-funded child care services during and after World War II, as well as the impact this

decision has had on Canada's social policy landscape.

Hence, this writer, informed by conflict theory, cites historical evidence, gathered from both primary and secondary sources, to explain how the current underdevelopment of child care services in Canada is related to the introduction of its family allowance program.

The economic crisis which precipitated the shift from Keynesianism to monetarism and neo-liberalism during the early 1970s provides the backdrop for Chapter 3, which traces the limited reappearance of federally-funded child care services in Canada.

Chapter 3 further highlights the policy gap that is the problem of focus in this thesis, i.e., Canada's current scarcity of regulated and comprehensive child care services. This is done by discussing the three main trends that characterize the contemporary child care landscape in Canada. They are: a) the static or declining development of child care services in most provinces; b) the increasing disparity among the provinces in terms of their child care policies, funding, and services; and c) the decreasing number of Canadian children aged zero to five (this suggests that now is an appropriate time for Canadian policymakers to develop more comprehensive child care services). Chapter 3 also includes an explanation of the NCB. This explanation serves to buttress the argument in Chapter 2 which proposes that a significant portion of the precedent set by the introduction of family allowances is a Canadian family policy framework which emphasizes cash/tax credits over in-kind benefits (e.g., child care).

As a means of showing how historical forces have contributed to policy developments that are different than Canada's, the comprehensive child care systems of two European nations, Sweden and France, are

outlined in Chapter 4.

Included in Chapter 4 is a discussion of the present-day scenario in which both parents are gainfully employed in the majority of Swedish, French, and Canadian households. Unlike families in Sweden and France, however, most Canadian families must rely on private and unregulated nonparental child care arrangements. This is prompting the demand of more child care services by many Canadians (Chapter 1) which, incidentally, leads us to consider the role social workers can play in filling this Canadian family policy gap.

## *5.2 The mechanization of social work.*

According to the code of ethics of the Canadian Association of Social Workers, social work

is a profession, committed to the goal of affecting social change on society and the ways in which individuals develop for the benefit of both. Social workers are accountable to the people they serve, to their profession, and to society, and the well-being of persons served is their primary professional obligation (Wharf, 1990, p. 162).

As a result of a scarcity of public sector resources resulting from the shift towards neo-liberalism (see Chapter 3), the capacity of social workers to fulfill the noble mandate of their profession is seriously thwarted, however. This is because management strategies based largely on fiscal reduction have forced human service organizations to embrace work styles that place emphasis on order and, ostensibly, cost-effectiveness. Concomitantly, social work skills involving collection of data, assessment, and effective interventions are being devalued by a proliferation of jobs which consist of onerous amounts of paperwork and other repetitive duties (Arches, 1991;

Fabricant, 1985; Hasenfeld, 1984).

Conflict theory can help us better understand this attack on the social work profession. As outlined in Chapter 1, one of the theory's tenets is the premise that the social order is comprised of groups and individuals trying to advance themselves over others, regardless of whether or not overt outbreaks take place.

In conjunction with the economic slowdown which earmarked the accumulation crisis of the 1970s, there was an exacerbation of capital/labour conflicts. Consequently, the state required a new model for appeasing these conflicts, so it embarked on an offensive against the social, cultural, legal, and political conditions which had characterized the Keynesian welfare state for the previous three decades (Browne, 1999).

This offensive included cutbacks to social service organizations. Not surprisingly, this greatly impeded their effectiveness in addressing social problems which, in turn, led to a heightened cynicism among the public towards the significance and relevance of social services within society. Thus, by spearheading fiscal attacks against social service agencies, proponents of neo-liberalism were able to covertly advance their interests over others within the social order. This is because, as mentioned, a growing number of citizens became disgruntled with the shortcomings of many social programs, while at the same time supporting further cutbacks to the welfare state because of concerns with the expanding debt burden. This resulted in greater popular acceptance of the neo-liberal mandate (Browne, 1999; Drover, 1998).

Today, the bureaucratization typical of many social service

agencies resemble factory conditions in terms of rigid structure and strict lines of authority. Organizing work in this way translates into social workers having little or no control over the pace of their duties, and are often unable to respond to clients in a humane fashion, since much of their interaction with clients involves explaining why benefits are inadequate and why program guidelines are rigid and unyielding. Consequently, many call for a revamping of social service organizations so that both clients and social workers are truly empowered (Arches, 1991; Wharf, 1990).

### *5.3 A community-based alternative.*

In many African and Latin American countries, community centres are the primary institutions through which human services are delivered. Community centres often operate prenatal and neonatal clinics, immunization programs, adult education classes, and conflict resolution services. They also provide a vehicle through which construction of major infrastructure projects, such as health clinics and irrigation systems, may be planned. In some cases, centers also assist community residents in organizing for social reform campaigns at the local or higher political levels (Estes, 1997).

In Wharf's (1990) consideration of the future of social work and the human services in Canada, it is noted that the development of social and health services that are governed by communities can be a viable means of circumventing the current scenario of centralization and bureaucratic domination.

Community governance implies the delegation of policy-making authority from senior levels of government to local communities, as

community members are ensured seats at policy-making tables and are actively involved in developing and managing social programs that affect them (Wharf and McKenzie, 1998).

There are a variety of reasons why greater community control/governance of human services has the potential to more adequately serve and empower communities than do services provided directly by the federal and provincial governments (which is not to say that government has no role to play in the funding or regulation of human services, but that local communities should be much more involved in the provision and development of services). The reasons for community control include: a) people are more sensitive to their own needs; b) community organizations often have more access to local information; c) commitment and chances of success are greatly strengthened when those who have to live with the outcomes of board/government activities are directly involved in decision making; and d) the need for transactions between external and local parties is reduced, thus, programs and services tend to be less hampered by bureaucratic constraints and more "community friendly" (Cassidy, 1991).

While community governance may pertain to a wide range of social services and programs, the focus in this thesis has been on Canadian family policy, particularly child care. Hence, it seems appropriate to apply the community-based model to the delivery of comprehensive child care services.

#### *5.4 What can social workers do?*

The community-based approach to social work practice is the antithesis of the current trend, whereby individual clients are framed

as "cases" and social workers as "case managers" who often attempt to "fix" problems by referring clients to a vast array of specialized agencies that may have conflicting or incongruent mandates. Conversely, community-based social work often involves reducing the number of human service agencies and merging them into comprehensive and flexible common sites of operation. It can also involve installing citizens as the managers or co-managers in the planning and implementation of the services that affect them (Wharf and McKenzie, 1998).

One proposed model for delivering a wide range of child care services in a coordinated manner at the community level is the *Neighbourhood Hub Model*. This involves neighbourhood resource centres being "hubs" that offer child care and other related services. The basic premise upon which this model is based is that child care services in a community should function as an integrated whole to ensure that all families with children have access to appropriate child care services. Furthermore, coordination of services at the local level allows for an efficient use of available resources with a high level of flexibility and responsiveness in order to meet the needs of the community (Friendly, 1994; Lind and Prentice, 1992).

A multitude of child care and related services can emanate from "hubs." Along with services offered during weekdays, there can be other kinds of child care, including weekend care, workplace care, and overnight care for shift workers. Examples of other programs that may be offered are parental education programs, cultural and heritage language celebrations, and parent support groups. Clearly, the "hub" model of child care is an embodiment of the community-based approach to



social work and human services that can truly serve to improve the functioning of families and communities (Lind and Prentice, 1992).

In the well-known text entitled *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), C. Wright Mills makes a distinction and shows the relationship between *personal troubles* and *public issues*:

In these terms, consider unemployment. When, in a city of 100,000, only one man is unemployed, that is his personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the man, his skills, and his immediate opportunities. But when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million men (sic) are unemployed, that is an issue, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual. The very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals (p. 9).

The absence of a comprehensive, regulated child care system is a *public issue* whose impact on the *personal* lives of Canadian families is of such magnitude that, as we proceed into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, social workers cannot afford to ignore it. In the words of Weick and Saleebey (1995), social workers must utilize "their rich understanding of families by proclaiming their strengths and by calling on communities to provide families with the resources they need" (p. 148).

Chapter 10 of the CASW code of ethics calls for social workers to advocate for change that is in the best interests of clients, and "for the overall benefit of society, the environment and the global community" (CASW, 1994, p. 24). Hence, by being key participants in the development and implementation of localized, flexible, and comprehensive child care services, social workers can be involved in change efforts that provide benefits to families which resound

throughout society, while concomitantly fulfilling the mandate of their profession.

## APPENDIX A - HOW MIGHT CANADA BENEFIT FROM ADOPTING A NATIONAL CHILD CARE SYSTEM?

### *1.1 Supporting arguments.*

The argument for a publicly-funded, regulated child care system can be made in two ways, corresponding to the two groups of direct beneficiaries: children and parents (Krashinsky and Cleveland, 1997). Although in reality the assumed benefits emanating from a comprehensive child care system for both of these groups are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, for clarity's sake it is helpful to consider each group separately.

#### *1.1.1 The benefits of child care for children.*

Because of the increasing number of women entering the labour force, each year more and more young children spend substantial portions of their preschool years in nonparental child care arrangements. With this change has come a growing concern about the impact of nonparental care on children's development (Friendly, 1994).

There is one school of thought which bases its opposition to child care services on the argument that child care outside the family is likely to be detrimental to children's development, and that young children should be cared for almost exclusively by their parents (usually their mothers) for the first few years of life. However, one of the most significant findings pertaining to the child care debate which has emerged from the growing body of child care research is that it is the quality of child care, not whether the child attends nonparental care per se, that has either a positive or negative impact on children's development. (Foster and Broad, 1998a; Friendly, 1994).

It has been demonstrated that child care rated as being of poor quality can have a negative impact on children's development, while child care deemed to be of good quality has been shown to have a positive influence. Moreover, as social workers are all too aware, there is no guarantee that all parents will provide quality care to their children on a consistent basis (Friendly, 1994).

One of the more comprehensive accounts of the beneficial effects of early childhood intervention is provided by *The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project*, which documented the participants' development from preschool into adulthood. Initiated during the 1960s in the United States, the goal of this project was to stimulate the cognitive development of three to five year-old children from low-income homes. The project consisted of a daily 2.5 classroom session for children on weekday mornings, as well as a weekly 1.5 hour visit to each participating child and mother on weekday afternoons (Tremblay and Japel, 1997).

The 123 children who participated in the project were assigned to either an experimental group that received the preschool program or to a control group that received no program. The children that participated in the preschool program differed from the control group according to several measures from their elementary school days on into their adulthood. For example, they obtained higher scores on IQ tests at age nine, they were less likely to be placed in special school programs or held back a grade by grade four, and by age 14 they scored higher on reading, arithmetic, and language tests. Furthermore, more members of the experimental group graduated from high school, and by age 27 they had attained a higher level of education and income

(Barnett, 1985; Tremblay and Japel, 1997).

A cost/benefit analysis applied to the project revealed that for every dollar invested in the program when the children were three and four years-old, the return was at least seven dollars by the time the children had reached 27 years of age. The program cost (in 1992 US dollars) was \$12,356 for each child. The estimated pecuniary benefits for each child in the program were an additional \$8,847 for taxes on earnings due to an increase in employment and wage-levels, and reductions of \$6,287 for remedial educational costs, \$2,918 in social assistance costs and, because of reduced crime rates, \$12,796 for costs related to judicial proceedings and \$57,585 for compensating crime victims. Clearly, the *Perry Preschool Program* proved to be a worthwhile investment from both a social and economic standpoint (Tremblay and Japel, 1997).

Cleveland and Krashinsky (1998) note that the findings of several child care studies

suggest that there is a 4 percent to 10 percent improvement in various indicators of the skills, abilities, and productivity of the children studied due to stimulative preschool experience in early years. These increased abilities would affect both the quality of life and eventual income-earning capacity of each child...A 10 percent improvement would imply an increase of \$100,000 in average lifetime earnings...over a lifetime these benefits, part of which accrue to the individual and part to society as tax payments and reduced need for social programs, would be substantial (p. 61).

Another study whose findings lend support to public child care is one conducted by Osborn and Milbank (1987). It was the first major evaluation of preschool education in Britain, as approximately 8500 children, all attending different types of preschool arrangements (e.g., full-day, full-week nurseries as well as part-time programs),

were assessed through a series of cognitive and educational tests at the age of five and then again at age 10 (Cleveland and Krashinsky, 1998).

Through the use of various statistical models, the researchers assessed the effects of the programs by controlling for a host of different factors which could affect the outcomes. Some of these factors included socioeconomic status, gender, type of preschool attended, handicap, etc (Cleveland and Krashinsky, 1998). The authors found that children

who had no preschool placement achieved the lowest mean test scores in four out of the seven tests analyzed and had the second lowest score in the other three. This suggests that attendance at most types of preschool facility (sic) can increase children's educational potential (Osborn and Milbank, 1987, p. 220).

A relatively recent (1990) study, entitled the *Canadian Victoria Day Care Research Project*, focussed on the relationships between types of child care programs, family background and child development. The three types of care were licenced day care centres (CDC), licenced family day care centres (LFDC), and unlicenced family day care centres (UFDC) (Goelman and Pence, 1990).

The study had an approximately equal number of boys and girls from one- and two-parent families within each care setting. Children whose parents agreed to participate in the study were selected on the basis of several criteria. They had all been enrolled in their current setting for at least six months, their mothers worked or studied at least 30 hours per week, and they were all either first-born or only children. There were no significant differences in the groups regarding parental education, income, or occupation (Goelman and Pence,

1990).

A variety of research instruments were used to obtain information on the quality of day care settings, the children's experiences in these settings, the caregivers' and parents' perceptions of the care environments, and the relationships between the children's experiences in day care, socio-demographic aspects of their family background, and their performance on standardized measures of language development (Goelman and Pence, 1990).

In terms of the quality of the care environments, 13 out of the 15 LFDCs were considered high-quality, while nine out of the 11 UFDCs were rated as low-quality. It was found that the children in the high-quality homes participated in activities associated with learning and important skill development with much greater frequency than did children in the low-quality homes. These activities included structured fine and gross motor exercises as well as cognitive activities such as reading. It should also be noted that in regards to the kinds of activities and experiences which are likely to facilitate language development, the CDCs scored higher than both the LFDCs and the UFDCs (Goelman and Pence, 1990).

One of the instruments used by the researchers to measure language development was the *Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test* (EOWPVT). Given the difference in quality found by the researchers between the licenced and unlicenced care settings, it is not surprising that children attending the UFDCs scored significantly lower on the EOWPVT than did those attending LFDCs and CDCs (Goelman and Pence, 1990).

Goelman and Pence (1990) note that before drawing the conclusion

that the lower quality of care was the causal factor in the children's lower test score, one should take into account that although the parent profile within each of the three types of care was fairly similar in terms of education, occupation, and income levels, there was a clustering of factors whereby children from higher resource families were found in better quality care settings than were the children from lower resource families. It is possible, therefore, that the backgrounds of the children from higher resource families also contributed to their higher levels of language development.

Despite this potentially confounding variable, the study clearly indicates that the quality of care was higher in the licenced facilities, which is an important factor to keep in mind when debating the pros and cons of a publicly-funded, regulated child care system.

It should be noted that there are research findings which, after taking socio-economic background into account, still suggest that children benefit from high-quality child care services. For example, in a U.S. longitudinal study in which hierarchical regression was used to control for the effects of social class, 20 four year-old children from middle-class homes were observed during free play at what were rated either high- or low-quality day care centers. The high-quality centers had better-trained teachers, more supplies, and lower adult-child ratios, as well as lower enrollments and smaller classes. They were also nonprofit organizations, while the three low-quality programs were commercial agencies (Vandell et al., 1988).

Compared to the children from the low-quality centres, the four year-old children from high-quality programs had more friendly and fewer unfriendly interactions with peers, were rated as more socially



competent, happier, and were perceived as being less shy (Vandell et al., 1988).

Approximately four years later, the same children were again observed in play sessions. The eight year-olds who had attended poor quality day care centers displayed more problematic behaviours than did their counterparts who had attended the higher quality programs four years earlier. During play sessions, they had fewer friendly and more frequent unfriendly interactions. Observers rated them as less socially competent and more unhappy, while peers gave them higher ratings of shyness. It should be noted that with only twenty children participating, the generalizability of this study is limited. Nonetheless, the findings do support the notion that high-quality child care can substantially improve children's functioning (Vandell et al., 1988).

In Howes's (1988) study, children's social and cognitive development was assessed after they completed the first grade. The statistical technique known as step-wise regressions was employed to explain the children's academic progress, school skills, and behaviour. These regressions took into account family characteristics such as the mother's level of education and occupation, whether children came from single- or dual-parent families, and the quality of child care received at age three. Controlling for family characteristics, higher quality of child care at age three was related to children's greater academic progress and fewer behaviour problems at the first-grade level.

Elaborating on the relationship between quality of care and its effects on children's development, Doherty (1996) states that the research has clearly shown that non-parental care...

may be beneficial, especially in the area of social and language skill development. However, the research is equally clear that non-parental child care has the potential to harm children, even those from middle-class homes. Children's development can be stunted when child care has one or more of the following characteristics: a caregiver who is neglectful or harsh, caregivers who are unable to provide individualized attention because they are responsible for too many children, and/or situations where the children lack adequate stimulation (p. 51).

The Canadian National Child Care Survey of 1988 reports that more than 74 percent of all children aged 18 months to five years-old were in nonparental arrangements during the reference week (Cleveland and Krashinsky, 1998). Thus, when one considers both the vast number of children placed in out-of-home care situations and the growing body of evidence which demonstrates a positive relationship between quality of care and children's functioning/development, it seems reasonable to assume that Canadian policymakers should increase the number of regulated child care services throughout the country.

#### *1.1.2 The benefits of child care for parents.*

Parents, especially mothers, derive a number of benefits from having good child care available. For instance, women are more likely to develop careers, accept promotions, and earn good incomes (Krashinsky and Cleveland, 1997).

Powell (1997) notes that empirical estimates for Canada indicate child care costs have a significant negative effect on the probability of labour force participation by married mothers with preschool-aged children, as the child care cost elasticity for employment is reported to be -0.38. In other words, a 100 percent reduction in child care costs is expected to increase the incidence of employment by married mothers with preschool-aged children by 38 percent.

As for female lone-parents in Canada, Powell (1997) explains that the availability of affordable child care plays a key role in whether they are able to make a transition from welfare-to-work, and that the

employment decisions of single mothers are relatively more sensitive than are those of their married counterparts...a 10 percent increase in the price of child care reduces the likelihood that a single mother of preschool-aged children will be employed by 6.62 percent (p. 12).

Friendly (1994) notes that the steady increase in labour force participation rates for Canadian women with young children makes it obvious that the limited access to high-quality child care services has not prevented a lot of mothers from entering the labour force. Nonetheless, many women's efforts to participate in the public sphere are stifled due to the paucity of child care services:

According to a Labour Canada survey, 121,000 women with young children reported that inadequate child care had either caused them to refuse a job or leave the labour force in that year...More recent evidence supports this. A 1991 survey by the Daily Bread Food Bank in Metropolitan Toronto found that 22.4 percent of food bank users identified child care responsibilities as the reason they were not working... In rural Algoma District in Ontario, a study found...20 percent of rural women are not working because they cannot find reliable child care for their children (p. 34).

Women with children who are participating in the labour force may be forced, due to a lack of child care supports, to accept less time-demanding jobs, possibly below their skill levels. This results in labour under-utilization and lower wages (Akyeampong, 1988).

In a frequently cited Canadian study analyzing the gap between the earnings of men and women who are employed full-time, Gunderson (1986) cites several factors contributing to this wage discrepancy. They include occupational segregation, wage discrimination, differences in rates of unionization, experience, education, and hours worked. As

noted by Gunderson, however, the fact that the bulk of child-rearing responsibilities is often assumed by mothers "is a crucial determinant of each and every one of these components" (p. 2). The corollary of this is that, with more access to child care services, the earnings of women with children would increase.

Thus, access to a wide range of child care services, regulated so as to ensure high levels of quality, is a social policy stance that could assist Canadian women and families in fulfilling their job and family responsibilities.

## APPENDIX B - A POSSIBLE POLICY BLUEPRINT FOR A NATIONAL CHILD CARE SYSTEM IN CANADA

### *1.1 Policy recommendations.*

The *Canada Health Act* contains the principles of Canada's health care system, medicare, which must be met by the provinces in order to qualify for the federal funds used to deliver health services to their residents. These principles are universal coverage, reasonable access, portability, comprehensive coverage, and public administration (Guest, 1997).

Likewise, a national child care system in Canada could contain guiding principles to which the provinces agree and adhere. This includes principles such as *comprehensiveness, universality, accessibility, quality, and accountability* (Battle and Torjman, 2000). These principles will now be elaborated upon.

#### *1.1.1 Comprehensiveness.*

In light of Canada's peculiar structure of federal/provincial relations governing the development and implementation of social policy, the provinces would determine the design of their respective child care systems, but federal funding should be introduced to help them develop a comprehensive range of child care services over time (Battle and Torjman, 2000; Guest, 1997).

This would include services such as full- and part-time group child care (includes weekends and evenings to accommodate shift workers), family day care, emergency child care, seasonal child care services, periodic child care for stay-at-home parents, and support services for

stay-at-home parents and other caregivers (Doherty et al., 1995).

An important complement to a comprehensive child care system is a parental leave policy that enables families to balance work and family responsibilities through job protection and financial benefits. This includes paid maternity leave following childbirth, paid parental leave to care for very young children, paid adoption leave which reflects the realities of adopting an infant or an older child who needs attention and care, and paid leave to carry out family responsibilities like care of children when they are ill (Friendly, 1994).

In 1999 the federal government extended employment insurance maternity and parental benefits, worth up to \$413 a week, from six months to one year. While many lauded the government's move, it was not without controversy (Geddes, 1999). This is because those women who are self-employed or who do not meet the criteria for collecting Employment Insurance are ineligible for benefits. Consequently, many women return to employment within a month of giving birth (Stroick and Jenson, 1999).

A feasible policy response to this problem is to remove maternity and parental benefits from the EI regime and create a separate fund for them, or create a separate compartment for them within the current program. Eligibility for maternity and parental benefits should be less stringent than the current rules, which were designed to meet the goal of limiting claims for periods of unemployment. It is also advisable to set the benefit level at 75 percent of income for all parents. Thus, families would not suffer such a huge loss in income when having a child (Stroick and Jenson, 1999).

### 1.1.2 Universality.

Contrary to popular opinion, universal child care services are not necessarily free of charge to parents, compulsory, entirely government-run, or delivered solely in full-day group child care centres (Friendly, 1994).

What universality does imply, however, is that all families (not just a targeted or selected segment of the population, or those wealthy enough to pay the full cost) are equally eligible for an appropriate child care service. In practice, families may have to join waiting lists. Nonetheless, each family on the waiting list has an equal chance of moving up the list, with an expectation that a child care space will be available within a reasonable period of time (Friendly, 1994).

Universality is intertwined with the aforementioned principle of comprehensiveness, in that families should be able to select which child care services they wish, or not at all. It stands to reason, however, that most families would likely use at least some of the available services, due to the high labour force participation of women and the benefits high-quality child care has for children's development. When one considers that although children's attendance at kindergarten is not compulsory, but that an overwhelming majority of Canadian families do use the service, it is likely that most parents would utilize regulated child care services at least part of the time (Battle and Torjman, 2000).

### 1.1.3 Accessibility.

Like other health, educational, and social services, child care

services cannot be made accessible to a broad cross-section of the population if it relies primarily on parent fees. Child care services, by their nature, are labour-intensive. Consequently, if child care programs are adequately staffed, and staff are adequately paid, then many families are unable to cover the full costs. Thus, in order to ensure parents' accessibility to child care services, the majority of funding should be provided through government revenue (Friendly, 1994).

This is not to say that parents should not be responsible for paying any direct costs. Rather, a geared-to-income payment system could be implemented, with fully subsidized services available to low-income families. Accessibility also connotes meeting the needs of families with children who have disabilities and of recent immigrant families (Battle and Torjman, 2000).

#### 1.1.4 Quality.

The quality of child care services is the cornerstone for a national child care system. We have already discussed the voluminous literature which strongly suggests that high-quality nonparental child care is linked to the enhanced development of children, while low-quality nonparental care arrangements can have detrimental effects on children (see Appendix A).

Research findings provide evidence that child care services have higher levels of quality when: a) adequate funding is provided that allows for the hiring of a sufficient amount of staff who have been formally trained in early childhood education, and for the distribution of reasonable salaries and benefits that are commensurate with the staff's skill level and education (this translates into decreased



turnover rates and better services for children); b) there are government regulations outlining levels of staff education, number of children per caregiver, and group size. These levels should reflect contemporaneous research findings associated with the well-being and optimal development of children; and c) regulated services are operated on a non-profit rather than a for-profit (commercial) basis. In comparison to non-profit services, commercial services have obtained lower scores on a standard overall measure of quality, are more likely to violate regulations regarding the permitted number of children per caregiver, to have lower proportions of staff with training in early childhood education, to pay lower salaries, and to have higher staff turnover rates (Doherty et al., 1995).

#### *1.1.5 Accountability.*

At the 1995 annual Premiers' Conference, the provincial leaders agreed that social policy reform represents one of the most significant challenges facing Canada, and they reaffirmed their commitment to improve their levels of cooperation with one another. Consequently, a body known as the *Provincial-Territorial Ministerial Council on Social Policy Reform and Renewal* was formed, which led to a Premiers' meeting in February 1999. From that meeting the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) was born (Battle and Torjman, 2000; Robinson and Simeon, 1999).

The SUFA sets out a number of principles regarding the social union that all governments (except Quebec, who did not join the agreement) maintain they are committed to, including greater transparency and accountability in the operation of social programs (Friendly, 2000;

Robinson and Simeon, 1999).

Thus, the SUFA provides the foundation for designing and implementing accountability provisions within a national child care system. All formal, regulated child care agencies and programs within a national system, including those operated by community organizations, should be accountable to the federal government, their respective provincial governments, and to the public in financial, administrative, and performance terms. This includes ongoing monitoring and periodic quantitative and qualitative evaluations of programs as well as community decision-making processes (Battle and Torjman, 2000).

#### *1.2 The Parental Care Expenses Benefit.*

In 1972, the federal government introduced the Child Care Expenses Deduction (CCED), so that parents who incur child care expenses in order to be employed or study could deduct some of the costs from their federal income tax. The deduction must be taken by the parent with the lower income (usually the mother) (Stroick and Jenson, 1999).

The CCED, found under Section 63 of the *Income Tax Act*, is now Canada's only universal, non-income-tested program available to parents that acknowledges the costs to families of having and raising children. The principle behind the CCED is the same one that covers the costs of doing business. For example, a business person's office expenses are deducted from their gross income and they are taxed on their remaining net income. In principle, this calculation makes sense because office expenses are a necessary cost of earning income and only the net income is available to the business person as disposable income. Likewise, parents must cover the costs of child care services in order to be

employed. Consequently, their disposable incomes are reduced (Friendly, 1994; Stroick and Jenson, 1999).

Conversely, two-parent, single-earner families do not incur child care expenses in order to be employed (it is assumed that the stay-at-home parent provides the bulk of the child care services). Thus, the CCED, which has a maximum receipted deduction of \$7,000 for a child under seven and \$4,000 for children aged seven to 16, levels the playing field by offsetting some of the necessary child care expenses when both parents enter the paid labour force (Stroick and Jenson, 1999).

Of course, if a national child care system were introduced, the costs of nonparental child care arrangements would be markedly reduced, as dual- and single-earner families would be able to select "items" (i.e., programs/services) from a child care menu at a reasonable cost proportionate to their incomes. Consequently, the CCED would no longer be necessary to offset the current substantial loss of disposable income families face when using nonparental child care services.

Parents utilizing few or none of the services offered through a national child care system would be at a disadvantage, however, since by caring for their own children they would reduce their disposable income as well as diminish their future earning potential. Thus, in order to level the playing field between dual- and single-earner families, the introduction of a *Parental Care Expenses Benefit* (PCEB) is recommended.

Tax concessions offered to families to assist with parental costs are often in the form of credits (which reduce the amount of tax payable) or deductions (which lower taxable income). Credits, which

can be refundable or non-refundable, are usually considered to be more beneficial to lower-income families because their relative value is higher for those with lower marginal tax rates. On the other hand, tax deductions are of a greater benefit to middle- and upper-income earners (Baker, 1995).

The PCEB could be in the form of a credit or a deduction, depending on the income of the parents (i.e., lower-income families would receive a refundable credit, whereas middle- and upper-income families would receive a tax deduction). The benefit could also be expanded with each additional child in the family, due to the greater costs incurred and the greater reduction on real and potential earnings. The PCEB would also promote gender equality, as it would recognize the value of stay-at-home parents' (usually women) contribution towards society through their provision of child care services and household maintenance. Given the increasing participation of women in the labour force (which would probably be augmented if a national child care system were implemented), only a minority of families would use the PCEB. Nonetheless, such a provision should be available to compensate those families not accessing a publicly-funded service.

### *1.3 Child care provisions for Aboriginal families.*

Under section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, the federal government is deemed as being responsible for "Indians" and "lands reserved for Indians", as well as the Inuit. Traditionally, the federal government has interpreted its responsibility as being limited to on-reserve Aboriginal persons, while maintaining that the provinces and territories are responsible for Aboriginal persons living off-

reserve as well the Metis population (Doherty et al., 1995).

Often the provinces and territories will respond by stating that section 9(24) of the *Constitution Act* implies that the federal government is responsible for all status Aboriginal persons, whether they live on- or off-reserve. Further complicating this jurisdictional debate (particularly in the matter of child care) is the fact that, as noted in Chapter 2, section 92 of the *Constitution Act* stipulates that the provinces and territories are accountable for the development and delivery of social welfare services (Doherty et al., 1995).

One of the consequences of this "passing the buck" process between the federal and provincial governments has been an underrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the child care system. For example, in 1993 Saskatchewan did not licence any child care programs on reserves, although Aboriginal organizations operated 10 licenced child care centres for Aboriginal children living off-reserve (Friendly, 1994).

Since the fertility rate of Aboriginal people is higher than the national average, child care is a particularly important issue for Aboriginal communities (Friendly, 1994). Undoubtedly, this demographic reality, in conjunction with the growing recognition of child care services as a form of early childhood education, has contributed to the federal government's relatively recent decision to become more actively involved in providing child care services to Aboriginal families.

For example, in 1995 the federal government announced the *First Nations/Inuit Child Care Initiative* to fund and establish child care programs in cooperation with regional First Nations and Inuit groups. During the mid-1990s, the federal government also introduced *Aboriginal Head Start*, an early intervention program with a strong focus on early

childhood development for off-reserve Aboriginal children. Under the aegis of Health Canada, the *Aboriginal Head Start* program was extended to on-reserve Aboriginal children in 1999 ("Early childhood care," 2000).

From the passage of the *Indian Act* in 1876 to at least the 1960s, the policy approach towards Aboriginal people was dominated by assimilation, which used, among other things, educational methods (i.e., the residential school system) to change the culture and character of Aboriginal children (Armitage, 1993).

In order to prevent child care services from being used as a means of extinguishing Aboriginal culture, it is important that the bulk of planning and implementing programs and services for Aboriginal children is conducted by Aboriginal communities themselves. Thus, the aforementioned five principles of a national child care system should be flexible enough to incorporate Aboriginal customs and worldviews.

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