NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO DAY CARE NEWS

February 1991

DAY CARE NEWS is a forum for the sharing of information between day care groups throughout the region, as well as providing information about what is happening on the federal. provincial, regional and local scenes, in terms of policy, legislation, advocacy groups' activities, parental concerns and other interests that our supporters may have.

We hope that this newsletter will combat some of the isolation that day care workers and advocates feel and that through the sharing of resources, ideas and actions plans, we can develop strategies to ensure the growth and strengthening of quality day care in Northwestern Ontario.

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

****

Contents:

March Forum Agenda.....2
New Child Care Setting.....3
Congratulations to Lee Angus.....3
Serious Threat.....3
Coalition's New Plan.....4
Added Funds for Child Care.....4
Child Care in Sweden.....5
Day Care Costs.....7
Federal Deductions.....7
No Go for PMSSR.....8
Playground Equipment.....9
Membership Renewal Form.....10

BOOK THESE DATES

FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 1991

AND

SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 1991

ANNUAL NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO REGIONAL DAY CARE COMMITTEE

FORUM

At the Stel Red Oak Inn, Arthur Street, Thunder Bay

AGENDA

FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 1991 6:30pm - 10:00pm

Registration 6:30pm - 7:30pm

Keynote Speaker - 7:30pm - Laurel Rothman, Past President of the Ontario Coalition of Better Child Care, speaking on the State of Child Care in Ontario, followed by a Wine and Cheese Reception.

SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 1991 8:30am - 5:00pm

Beverages and Muffins 8:00am - 9:00am

Panel Discussion 9:00am - 9:45am - State of the Region of Northwestern Ontario

Break 9:45 - 10:00am

Overview and workshops on the U-turn document and pay equity
10:00am - 12 noon Dave Hagerman and Carol Anne Sceviour

Luncheon and business meeting 12 noon - 1:30pm

Overview of the new Child Care Network 1:30pm - 2:00pm

Provincial Strategy Workshops 2:00pm - 3:30pm

Break 3:30pm - 3:45pm

Plenary Session and concluding cash prize draw - 3:45pm - 4:30pm

NEW CHILD CARE SETTING IN THUNDER BAY'S COUNTY PARK

by Bobbi Tamblyn

The Lakehead District Roman Catholic Separate School Board will be building a new elementary school in the County Park area, targeted opening date September, 1992. In accordance with the new legislative agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services, a child care centre will be established in the school.

As of January 25, 1991, a community needs assessment has been completed. As soon as the data from the assessment has been processed architectural drawings will be completed.

The new child care centre will be non-profit, run by a parent volunteer board of directors. Anyone who is interested in becoming an advisory board member, or helping in the planning and set up in these very initial stages and throughout the project is urged to contact Bobbi Tamblyn at (807) 625-1545. As well, any input, comments or suggestions are welcome.

In the meantime, we'll keep you posted.

CONGRATULATIONS TO LEE ANGUS

Lee Angus, formerly employed be the NWORDCC, has accepted the position of special constituency assistant to the Minister of Revenue in Toronto . The Honourable Shelley Wark-Martyn has gained a very valuable employee. We will miss her and we wish her the best in her new job.

SERIOUS THREAT IN THUNDER BAY

With the new 1991 municipal budget going before the Thunder Bay City Council on February 12th, the Thunder Bay Advocates for Quality Child Care are organizing parents and representatives of non profit child care centres across the city to protest the proposed cuts to child care funding. The new budget is proposing the closure of the Grace Remus Municipal Day Care Centre, cutting all purchase of service agreements for subsidized spaces with other child care centres and cutting the municipally funded private home day care program. The Advocates urge all concerned residents to call the city council members, write letters to the City of Thunder Bay and to your Members of Provincial Parliament.

ONTARIO COALITION PRESENTS A NEW PLAN

by Linda Hossie (The Globe and Mail)

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care proposed a $560-million child are program to the New Democratic government at a meeting on November 8, 1990, which brought positive comments from both sides.

This cost, which would be shared by the provincial and federal governments and parents, does not include pay equity. One estimate for pay equity for the 22,000 child care workers is $24-million.

The proposal also called for an additional 10,000 child care spaces.

In this document called the U-Turn, the Coalition proposed that fees for child care services be abolished, that day care become a provincially funded service similar to education and that the province be responsible for collecting fees from parents and other funders. Under this proposal, children would enter programs as their names came up on the waiting list.

Their parents would then take an income test to determine the amount of their child care contribution and the province would bill them on a monthly or quarterly basis, similar to the way once used for OHIP.

Added Funds for Child Care

Zanana Akande announced on January 31, 1991, a total of 5,000 additional child care subsidies. As well, she stated the government will provide $30 million as a "down payment" for pay equity for child care workers in the non-profit sector.

Janet Davis, president of the Ontario Coaltion for Better Child Care stated: "We're really pleased. I think it shows a real commitment to child care in a time of economic restraint, a time when the provincial government is really hurting."

Liberal MPP Lyn McLeod termed the announcement "woefully inadequate", arguing that it will still leave thousands of Ontario children unable to get into day care.

Presently in Thunder Bay, there are over 600 children on child care waiting lists. Will the municipalities take advantage of this?

$$$

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE OF CHILD CARE IN SWEDEN

by Teresa Legowski

I took the opportunity to interview Asa Petterson, an exchange student teacher from Sweden, whose placement occurred in my daughter's junior kindergarten class. The following is a brief description of the state of child care in Sweden from Ms. Petterson's perspective.

In Sweden, a kindergarten program does not exist. Formal elementary school begins when the child is seven years old. From the ages of one up to seven, the child attends a preschool (popularly known as day care). At the preschool, the program becomes progressively academic as the child gets older. By the time the child is six, half of each day is devoted to academic programs.

Presently, the Swedish government is exploring the possibility of increasing the age of entry for children into preschool to 18 months. This is directly related to the high demand for child care spaces. At the same time, the government would extend the parental leave program to 18 months from the birth of the child. Technically, babies can be cared for in their own homes by their own parents for 18 months.

Incidentally, the present parental leave program can be up to one year, depending on how the parent chooses to receive the benefit. If the parent wants to receive benefits for five days a week, instead of seven days a week, then s\he can stay home and receive 90% of his\her salary for one year, rather than nine months. (Nine months would be paid benefits for seven days a week).

The Ministry of Education is responsible for child care and collects a user fee directly from the parents. This fee is based on a percentage of their income, but in no way covers completely the actual costs associated with running child care. The fee is the same for all ages, and always includes meals, snacks and extra time. Tax payers subsidize the rest of the costs.

As mentioned previously, the six year old's program involves half a day of academics. Thus the content is viewed as being part of the elementary school system and parents only pay a half day fee. Fees are less per child, if the family has two or more children enroled in the preschool.

Parents have the following child care choices available. The regular preschools are located in both urban and rural centres. In smaller centres, children from ages one to six are housed in one building. In larger, urban centres some preschools are divided into different buildings: one housing the 1-3 year olds; the other housing 4-7 year olds. A few child care centres are open over night and on weekends, but not very many. Sometimes, there are up to 64 children in one centre.

Another program is the cooperative parent preschool. Usually, these programs are located in renovated houses. Two teachers are hired, but the parents come in as helpers on a rotational basis for blocks of two weeks. This offers parents and their children the opportunity for a more intimate relationship. However, not all parents have the flexibility to be committed to such blocks of time.

The government also funds a program of registered home day cares. This is especially popular for infant care.

Before and after school programs are available to children up to 12 years of age. Most are still located at the preschools, but the government is now beginning to implement a program where this will be available at the child's school. Private child care is also an option. In all cases, except for the private child care scenario, the government totally funds the programs, and collects parental fees.

The child:staff ratio for the ages of 18 months to three years is 12 children for every two and one-half full time teachers. For the three to seven year old children, it is 15-18 children to two and one-half full time teachers.

A university degree of two and one-half years duration is required to become a teacher for 3-7 year olds, and for the before and after school programs. For teaching a younger child a college degree is required. The government is presently looking at standardizing teachers' qualifications.

The programming itself is based on several principles which reflect Swedish culture: peace, solidarity, self esteem, democracy and cooperation. The emphasis is on how to become a good, socially functioning person. It is child centred, with more emphasis on functioning within the group and less on the individual. The emphasis in North America is away from peace and the group and more on the individual.

Day Care Costs

The annual cost of day care for a three year old across Canada, according to management consultants Runzheimer Canada Inc., for full time, commercial operations are as follows: Toronto, $6,612; Yellowknife, $5,760; Ottawa, $5,712; Whitehorse, $4,824; Saskatoon, $4,740; London, Ontario, $4,512; Montreal, $4,392; Quebec City, $,380; CANADIAN AVERAGE, $4,284; Vancouver, $4, 152; Regina, $4,080; Halifax, $4,020; St. John's, $3,948; Calgary, $3,804; Winnipeg, $3,684; Victoria, $3,636; Edmonton, $3,348; Saint John, $2,940.

FEDERAL DEDUCTION FALLING WAY BEHIND

The income tax system's child care expense deduction is falling way behind the real cost for many parents.

A working parent is allowed a child care expense tax of up to $4,000 for each child who is under the age of seven or infirm. So parents in the adjacent table's bottom six cities can use the pre-tax dollars to pay the full cost of day care for their three year olds, but the others cannot.

When the child is between seven and 14, the child care deduction drops to $2,000.

There was a recent court ruling concerning this deduction. At issue was the restriction that if both parents are "supporting persons" the deduction can be claimed only by the one with the lower income.

In that case, the trial division of the Federal Court affirmed that if one spouse has no income at all, the deduction can be claimed by the other spouse, who does have an income. Previously, Revenue Canada maintained that the zero-income spouse was the lower income person, and the only one entitled to the deduction, even though there was no income against which it could be claimed.

****

NO GO FOR PMSSR

by Margaret Phillips

The Northwestern Ontario Regional Day Care Committee has prepared a response to the report of the Provincial Municipal Social Services Review (PMSSR) outlining our concern that the implementation of the PMSSR would have severe negative effects on child care in Northwestern Ontario.

Our concern centres on three areas. Firstly, the basic issue of social services funding deficiencies is not addressed. The serious under funding that has plagued child care for 20 years has not even been considered. We feel it is not useful to determine new management roles when basic funding issues have not been dealt with.

Secondly, we believe that reallocating the responsibility for the discretionary services of child care and community based services to the municipal sector would lead to an erosion of child care services. In the long term, child care and services for elderly people will experience the greatest expansion. The recommendation for 75%/25% provincial/municipal funding for these services will place an inequitable financial burden on the municipal tax base. Given the financial constraints already experienced by municipalities, it can be easily assumed that many municipal governments will be <u>both unwilling and unable</u> to meet the community's needs for child care and community based services.

Thirdly, we are troubled by the vagueness of the PMSSR report in respect to jurisdictional responsibilities in the north. The report provides no clarification of what the "municipal sector" means in Northern Ontario. Thus we cannot adequately analyze the PMSSR from a Northwestern Ontario perspective. We are also concerned about the demand that the municipal sector assume the planning responsibility. This would impose increased financial burdens on the municipal tax base.

Copies of our brief may be obtained form the NWORDCC office.

??

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT GUIDE ISN'T DEALING WITH FIRE CONCERNS

The Canadian Standards Association has recently released a 120 page report containing extensive information for playground equipment, including surface guidelines requirements, standards for playground equipment construction, standards for areas surrounding the equipment and measurements for head and neck entrapment.

Evidence given at a Dryden inquest a year ago underlined the urgency of the CSA standards which were completed last April, after three years of work by CSA officials.

However, recommendations for non-flammable playground equipment will not be part of new standards to be published by the Canadian Standards Association, despite the severe burning of a Timmins child at a municipal playground last November.

Eight year old Jennifer Marsh of Timmins suffered second and third degree burns after a three foot plastic tunnel that she had been playing in caught fire. She was admitted to a Sudbury hospital.

Parts of the melted half inch walled tunnel were sent to Toronto to the forensic laboratories. The rest of the plastic tunnel and accompanying plastic slide were sent to the Ontario Fire College in Gravenhurst for flammability testing.

Referring to the wood and tires adjacent to the plastic tunnel on the playground apparatus, Burt Schaffer, the Timmins fire chief, said "Nothing can be burned without someone igniting it".

1991 MEMBERSHIP

At the 1988 Forum a membership structure for the Northwestern Ontario Regional Day Care Committee was approved. Memberships are now available. Membership categories are:

Category A: Municipal Councils/Indian Band Council; Day Care Centres; Professional Organizations; Regional Associations; Labour Unions.
Fee: $50.00

Category B: Parent Groups, Voluntary Community Organizations.
Fee: $25.00

Category C: Individuals.
Fee: $5.00

To join, please complete this application form, detach and return to: N.W.O.R.D.C.C.
P.O. Box 144
Thunder Bay, Ont.
P7C 4V5

1991 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I believe in the purpose of The Northwestern Ontario Regional Day Care Committee and I wish to become a member.

_____
Signature

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____

Phone Number: _____ Fee Enclosed _____

Category: A____ B_____ C_____

Thankyou for your support.