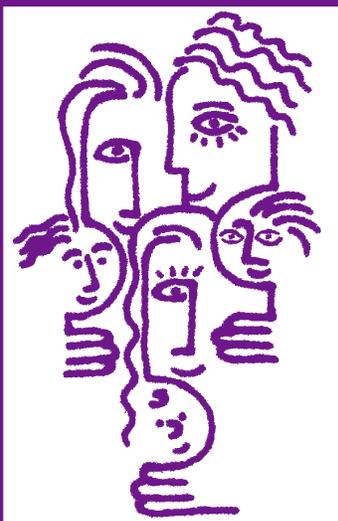


June, 2000

*A bulletin of the Child Care
Human Resources Round Table*

Our Child Care Workforce



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Child care sector launches Round Table

It was the culmination of a long road travelled, and the launching of a new vehicle to undertake the future journey. The Child Care Human Resources Round Table Symposium held on April 7 - 9 was the beginning of a new and important evolutionary phase for the sector.

“We have gathered at this symposium to celebrate our sector, to lift up the power of our sector and to endorse a new vehicle for moving our sector forward in a collaborative and collective way,” said Gyda Chud, interim chair of the Round Table, as she opened the symposium. With those words, the work of the new Round Table and the 100 symposium participants began—but not before some lively connections were made.

“All of us know at least one of us, many of us know most of us, but none of us know all of us,” Chud told the participants. “An exciting aspect of a gathering such as this one is the opportunity to extend, broaden and deepen our connections.” And deepen they did right from the start, with some interesting introductory activities to help participants find out more about each other.

There were parents and grandparents at the symposium; people involved in home or family child care, centre-based or school age care, and early intervention. There were trainers and researchers, unionized workers, domestic workers, child care advocates, and representatives from national and provincial organizations. They came from every province in Canada, and from two of the territories.

“Our symposium is indeed ground-breaking,” said Chud. “This is in fact the first gathering of this kind, bringing together all of our constituencies to work together in a new way, through a new structure. We are the world of child care. We are the child care sector—a word, a term and a concept that we will come to understand more fully over the weekend.”

It was a jam-packed weekend of sharing and learning. There were presentations about the sector study and its findings, the experiences of cultural and educational sector councils, the sectoral approach in Québec, and labour’s view of sector councils. There were participant workshops and an unprecedented opportunity to share experiences with people from other parts of the child care sector.



A promising vehicle

The formation of the Child Care Human Resources Round Table is an opportunity to strengthen a fragmented and isolated workforce, said Joanne Morris. Morris was part of the child care sector study process from its inception, and is an inaugural Round Table member. She was making a presentation to the symposium on the Round Table's promise and potential.

"There is a potential to focus within and find ways to support and develop the workforce, at the same time as focusing outwardly for the recognition and value within society deserved by this unique and special workforce," she said.

Morris noted that the Round Table's mission statement says it will provide a sectoral structure for moving forward on human resource issues, through cooperative and collaborative actions that enhance the efforts of the national partners and the child care workforce.

"This indicates a spirit of mutual trust, which is embedded in the way that the Round Table will take action," she said. "We believe that a common good for the workforce will be derived from a collective approach to human resource issues."



Bringing together diverse child care voices

The Child Care Human Resources Round Table is a “made by child care” sectoral structure. It is a formalized mechanism for the child care sector to address human resource issues. At the same time, it is a flexible sectoral approach that will allow the sector to move forward through joint projects and activities. The Round Table’s purpose is to enhance and support the existing child care infrastructure; to bring together the voices of child care organizations and the voices of the various child care constituencies, especially those that have so far been marginalized and under-represented; and to provide a forum and format that is non-hierarchical, co-operative and collective.

There are four organizations with seats at the Round Table. In addition, there are nine constituent seats. Five of these are for the various child care settings; four are for related child care areas. There is also one seat for an interim chair, and one for a representative of provincial/territorial directors of child care (ex officio).

Inaugural participants

Who are the people representing the voices of the four organizations and various child care constituencies on the Child Care Human Resources Round Table? What do they say about the Round Table’s potential? The inaugural Round Table participants bring with them 319 years of experience in child care—a deep and broad understanding of how child care works from a human resources perspective. Below, they speak about what inspires them about the Round Table.

Four organizations

Canadian Child Care Federation

“What’s inspiring to me is that we are all working together. It’s called a child care sector human resources Round Table and it came from a sector, not sectors, study.”

Sandra Griffin, Executive Director, CCCF,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

“For decades, we’ve been talking about the need to recognize child care teachers and providers as a distinct sector of the workforce in order to achieve recognition of the value of the work they do. The Round Table is going to provide the vehicle to accomplish this. Improving the status of the field will move us forward in our efforts to refocus society’s resources on children.”

Cynthia Magloughlin, Executive Director,
CCAAC, Ottawa, Ontario.

Canadian Labour Congress

“I’m inspired about our sector coming together in this way—that labour, the organized workforce, is recognized as an integral part of the sector and represented on the Round Table. This means that when we look at all the human resource issues in child care, we will be looking at them from a broader perspective.”

Jamie Kass, Child Care Coordinator for the
Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Ottawa,
Ontario.

Confédération des syndicats nationaux

“There’s so much knowledge and experience around this table that will help us make things happen in a very concrete way. From an organizational point of view, the CSN feels it can bring a lot to this forum by sharing its experiences in child care, but also believes it will gain a great deal by communicating with other members of the Round Table.”

Louise Bourgon, Professor and Coordinator
of the Department of Early Childhood Education,
Collège Édouard-Montpetit, Longueuil, Québec.



Bringing together diverse child care voices



Constituent voices

School age child care

"It was my work on the regulation review in Manitoba that made me keenly aware of the workforce crisis we're experiencing in the province. If there's going to be a future for what I call our industry, we've got to have a way to fix some of that stuff."

Ron Blatz, Executive Director, Discovery Children's Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Centre-based child care

"I felt that the issues involved in the Round Table discussions, and the consensus building approach, would be something child care providers and those related to child care in New Brunswick could take hold of. It's a different approach and sometimes we need that to regenerate and regroup. I also felt that in New Brunswick we needed a stronger connection at the national level."

Dixie Lee van Raalte, Executive Director, MicMac Maliseet Child Care Council, Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Regulated family child care

"My work in Québec has been primarily on human resource issues, so this is something I've done from the very beginning. But I felt that working on the Round Table would give me a broader perspective, and an opportunity to share my experiences with others too. It is a way to get things moving for the child care workforce."

Francine Lessard, executive director, Fédération des centres de la petite enfance du Québec (Federation of Early Childhood Centres), Cap-Rouge, Québec.

Unregulated family child care

"I believe the Round Table has the potential to provide a vehicle to provoke change in, and for, our child care workforce. Our work on the sector study and the creation of the Round Table has offered the first meaningful, long-term opportunity for broad sectoral action that I've experienced in more than 20 years' involvement in child care. Moving forward collectively on human resource issues will be both exciting and challenging."

Lee Dunster, Director of the National Family Child Care Training Project.

Child care provided in the child's own home

"The reason that I applied to be part of this great adventure is that I have 20 years experience in child care. I have been involved in most delivery models and have experienced the unique problems relative to each. In my experience the one issue that cuts across all delivery models is the human resources issue. I wanted to be part of the solution. I saw the round table as a perfect opportunity to do just that."

Noreen Murphy, Executive Director, Churchill Park Family Care Society.

Other seats

Interim chair

"This is an opportunity to forge a new, collaborative approach to advancing human resource issues—the potential for coming together as a field and a sector, the promise of 'together we are stronger.' The Round Table truly does reflect a maturing of child care, so it's an exciting and challenging opportunity to be involved in a new way of working among and across our organizations and constituencies."

Gyda Chud, faculty and coordinator, Early Childhood Education Program, Vancouver Community College.

A representative of provincial/territorial directors of child care (ex officio)

"What a wonderful opportunity we have! The collective experience and knowledge of the Round Table members will give us new and fresh perspectives on issues we've talked about for many years. This is a big step in the long road we've travelled, and should certainly move the field of early childhood care and education forward."

Kathleen Flanagan-Rochon, Provincial Coordinator for Community Services, PEI Department of Health and Social Services.

Related areas

Training and education

"I really felt an opportunity to bring the experience and knowledge I have to the work of the Round Table. I feel that education and training are going to be important factors for all the constituencies. Education, professional development, certification, distance

education and prior learning assessment are all ways that will help to address the human resource issues."

Joanne Morris, faculty member in early childhood education, College of the North Atlantic, St. John's Newfoundland.

Employers/parents

"It is a real opportunity to participate and to bring my experience to a process that's going to move our profession forward. I believe so strongly we are on the cusp of change."

Sheila Davidson, Executive Director, Simon Fraser University Child Care Society.

Research

"Research clearly documents that the most important thing for quality is the interaction between child and child care provider. Studies have also consistently found that the quality of this interaction is influenced by providers' education levels, their wages and their satisfaction with their work environment. We know

that much needs to be improved in terms of wages and working conditions. For the sake of the children, as well as the adults, it is essential that we address these crucial human resource issues."

Gillian Doherty, child care policy analyst and researcher, and adjunct professor at the University of Guelph, Ontario.

Related workforce (such as family resource centres, early intervention)

"I got excited when I read the description about the Round Table and how different parts of the sector would get together and push forward into action on some of these child care issues that have been around for a long time. It seems like a good time and a good idea, and I feel very privileged to be working with some of the incredible people in the child care sector who have for years been innovators and motivators. As we go into the 21st century I see these Round Table discussions assisting Canadians to ensure that our child care issue finally comes of age in a positive way."

Carol Oberg, Licensing Officer, Child Care Services Unit for the Yukon Government.

Language is power

Today's environment is more favourable for recognizing the child care sector's major contribution to children, families and society, said Louise Bourgon, the Round Table member representing the Confédération des syndicats nationaux on the opening night of the symposium. "The Round Table's purpose is to ensure that this recognition goes beyond just words."

"We know through research that investment in child care is productive, with economic spin-offs that more than double the original investment," Bourgon added. "There is also ample research showing child care's social contribution. Children's success in school is closely related to the kind of care they receive at an early age. Child care services also have an impact on women and families. Child care supports all women—not just women who are working or studying."

Bourgon said that "sector" is a new word for those involved in child care. She added that this is a meaningful change for child care, which has traditionally been talked about as a "network" or "field." These terms reflect the links built in child care, and the mutual support and solidarity that have characterized the field from the beginning.

"By adding 'sector,' this marks a new stage in the development of child care services," she said. "'Sector' is used to refer to a segment of industry or the economy. It is a way to talk about the economic and social contribution of child care to society and the economy. Our aim is to make this change in language significant so that it reflects a change in our action."

Four organizations bring strong messages

The four organizations with seats at the Round Table were instrumental in its formation. They are strongly committed to ensuring that the child care community has a voice to address human resource issues, and have invested a great deal of time and resources to the development of the Round Table. Their representatives brought powerful messages of endorsement to the symposium:

“ The CSN feels it has taken an important step towards developing its vision and demands for the child care sector in Québec by integrating various sector representatives into one committee. We can therefore easily imagine a Round Table where most of the partners will sit. . . We want it to be representative of the sector: in other words, creative, imaginative, innovative, dynamic, proactive, even visionary.”

Denise Boucher, vice-president,
Confédération des syndicats nationaux.

“ We are convinced that the important work of the Round Table is compatible and congruent with the CCAAC's long-term goal, which is to move to a publicly funded, accountable child care system entitling every child and her family to a range of quality services in their community. It is exciting to know that . . . there is a vehicle to address [caregiver] issues while we continue our efforts directed at various jurisdictions of government.”

Rebecca Sherer, Co-chair,
Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada.

“ I want to say right from the start that the Canadian Labour Congress endorses and is proud to support the establishment of the Round Table. We look forward to listening and learning. We feel we bring an important perspective of knowledge around women's inequality and strategies for achieving change.”

Penni Richmond, Director,
Women's and Human Rights Department,
Canadian Labour Congress.

“ On behalf of our affiliate member council and the Board of Directors, I want to reaffirm our endorsement of the Round Table. We believe in the Mission Statement and accept the Guiding Principles. We will be prepared to work toward the 'winning conditions' for sectoral partnerships.”

Sandra Beckman,
President, Canadian Child Care Federation.

Participants work hard to advise Round Table

They started out as clean, smooth flip charts. But by the end of two intense workshop sessions on Saturday and Sunday, there were more than 150 sheets packed with bold writing in various marker colours—reflecting the animated discussions and the thoughtfulness of the participants' input into the work of the Round Table.

The workshops were an opportunity for participants to steep themselves in the recommendations of the sector study, share their responses and experiences in terms of their own realities, and offer suggestions to the Round Table for translating

the study's recommendations into action.

The ideas were plentiful and varied, especially when it came to strategies the Round Table could use to develop projects around the study's five key recommendation areas: public policy, legislation and funding; infrastructure; wages, benefits and working conditions; training and education; and research. There were suggestions about developing a web site, data bases and regional forums as ways of collecting and disseminating information on child care human resources issues; about ways the Round Table

could play a key role in public education about child care human resources issues; about mechanisms that could be used to ensure ongoing communication with the child care workforce; and about how the Round Table might influence public policy in all of the study's

theme areas.

The workshop results demonstrated how much work there is to be done on human resource issues in child care. The flip charts will be put to good use: they will form the basis for the Round Table's upcoming strategic planning session.

Send us your feedback

The Child Care Human Resources Round Table would like to hear your ideas for strategies to move forward the recommendations of the sector study. Contact us c/o 3rd Floor, 323 Chapel Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7Z2. Fax: (613) xxx-xxxx. E-mail: hr_roundtable@hotmail.com

Working together for change

Gyda Chud is the interim chair of the Round Table and has been involved in the sector study process from the beginning, first as chair of the steering committee and then the transition committee. In this interview, she talks about the Round Table's promising beginnings and some of its plans.

Q. There is a child care crisis in Canada, and yet there seems to be a general feeling of potential for change. What can realistically be expected of the Round Table's ability to effect change?

One thing that is consistently true within our sector is people's capacity to hold onto a vision and invest themselves in moving issues forward. The expectations for the Round Table are tremendously high and this should serve as a source of inspiration, motivation and endorsement to those of us who have the responsibility to carry out its work.

Through the four organizations and constituency representatives we now have a new way of planning, linking and integrating our work, and showing that together we are stronger.

Q. A key element of successful sectoral partnerships is trust. Has the sector study process built the kind of trust that will endure and help the Round Table to succeed?

Where there's vulnerability, fragmentation and under-resourcing, it's natural that organizations would feel uneasy at the start. During the sector study process, as we came to know each other better and deepen our understanding of the issues, a strong sense of trust did indeed grow. We faced challenges, we problem-solved and we were successful in keeping our eye on the prize.

So there is already a strong foundation, and trust will continue to grow as we come

to know each other better and work together. I believe that the individuals and organizations involved do have the kind of trust, integrity and vision to ensure the Round Table's success.

Q. How will the Round Table be able to do its work without becoming financially self-sustaining?

The Round Table will undertake its work with support from Human Resources Development Canada. Funding for our various initiatives and activities will have to be sought on a project-specific basis. To date, HRDC staff have been supportive and committed to seeing that our process and our work continue to move forward. Although there are no guarantees around sustained funding, we remain optimistic. Our position is that child care's sectoral approach deserves equitable support—the support that we know is provided to all other sectoral structures.

It's also really important to highlight that the Canadian Labour Congress, as one of our four organizational members, has made a substantial cash contribution to our work. As well, through volunteer time and activity, the RT members themselves make a very significant in-kind contribution.

Q. The Round Table had many more applicants than seats and there are bound to be some who are disappointed that they weren't selected. Do you have any message for them?

The fact that there were 47 highly impres-

sive applications speaks to the breadth and depth of leadership in our sector. It demonstrates that there are many real child care champions working in a very active way in their regions and various constituencies.

Clearly, the members of the selection committee had a real challenge before them and undertook their responsibility with a great deal of thought and planning. Still, we know there is disappointment for many. But there will be other ways to become involved. It is our intention to develop working groups and reference groups around certain issues and here we'll be welcoming experience and expertise from the sector. Remember too, the Round Table members are likely to sit for a two-year term, ensuring that new applicants can continue to come forward.

Q. What is the next order of business for the Round Table?

The order of business is huge and in July, we'll embark on a strategic planning process to shape and organize our internal work—how we'll work together—as well as the initial projects to move human resource issues forward. In preparation, we're updating ourselves on relevant research and initiatives that are timely and topical, considering priority areas and thinking about activities that will really make a difference to our workforce. By the fall, we want to be well on our way to developing and submitting proposals to translate the process into action. It's a tall order, but we're up for it!

Getting the recognition we deserve

The establishment of the Round Table is a huge step for the child care workforce and the struggle for universal child care, activist and author, Judy Rebick, told the symposium.

Rebick said one of the major barriers to recognition of the value of the sector was its fragmentation. "I think all the different players in the sector coming together will be really powerful."

She challenged the way value is determined in society. "Does sitting at a computer and e-trading provide value to us? But look at all the hype there is about this."

She said that flight attendants were once treated as "glorified waitresses" even though they have dangerous, difficult jobs. But they are no longer viewed this way "because they're organized and their unions fought to have their value recognized."

"It shows the relationship between value and wages. We think that as women it's unseemly to ask for more money if we're caregiving. We have to understand

that financial value is reflective of and reflects back on the work people do in our society."

Rebick added that unionization has also raised the wages and recognition of other female-dominated jobs, such as nursing and teaching. In particular, recent nurses' strikes focussed public attention on the health care crisis, and the connection between the quality of services, and the wages and working conditions of

service providers.

Rebick told participants that child care is not only a right for children, but is also essential to women's equality, an area that needs to receive more attention from the child care movement.

"Your work is important to women, to parents and to children. Armed with the information and knowledge you have, you can make a difference."

Such a long journey

Those involved in the child care sector study process from its inception five years ago, have had "lives filled with short years and long days." Here is an outline of those "short" years:

- February 1996. Human Resources Development Canada, which has been sponsoring a series of human resource studies through the Sectoral Partnership Initiatives, approves a sector study of the child care workforce.
- A 36-member steering committee is struck

to oversee the team of three researchers working on the study. The committee is diverse, consisting of representatives from the broad child care sector.

- The committee goes to work to define the study's scope. It concludes that issues of policy and funding are inextricably linked to the human resource issues in the sector and that the study cannot move forward without taking into account the broader issues.

- Over the next two years, the committee guides the study's process and contents, and considers, debates and wrestles with many complex and contentious issues. These discussions ultimately shape the final report, *Our Child Care Workforce*. The recommendations are divided into five areas: public policy, legislation and funding; infrastructure; wages, benefits and working conditions; training and education; and research.

- May 1998. *Our Child Care Workforce* is launched on Parliament Hill and is a resounding success. The launch is packed with media. There is regional media follow-up and lots

of interest from all parts of the sector itself.

- What now? The steering committee decides it needs a structure to lead the sector to the next phase. An 11-member child care human resources transition committee is formed to work on one of the report's 23 recommendations: to explore the establishment of a sector council to address the human resource needs in child care.

- June 1998 to January 1999. The transition committee researches the pros and cons of sector councils.

- The committee suggests the establishment of a Child Care Human Resources Round Table to move the sector study recommendations forward.

- April 1999 to April 2000. The transition committee builds support for the Round Table from the child care community and other key stakeholders, and plans the April 7-9, 2000 symposium in Ottawa to launch the Round Table.

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