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Child Care Services Decades Behind Reality, Says YWCA Canada

No Response to Revolution in Women's Education and Employment

Toronto, Monday, March 7, 2011 – The absence of a national plan for child care services is a social policy gap that is decades behind reality, says a new report from YWCA Canada, the nation's oldest and largest women's service provider. *Educated, Employed and Equal: The Economic Prosperity Case for National Child Care* documents quiet revolutions in women's employment and education since the 1970s that have seen women close the gender gap with men in employment numbers and reverse it in higher education. Instead of a national policy creating comprehensive early learning and child care services, the federal government has left a policy vacuum.

"On the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day, the evidence is in. Women's lives have changed. A national plan for quality affordable early learning and child care services is not a luxury, a frill or a threat to Canadian families," says Paulette Senior, CEO of YWCA Canada. "It's an essential support and needs to become as normal in our social system as public school. Parents need this choice today."

The employment rate for women with children under 3 increased 233% between 1976 and 2009, and women moved from 32% of university graduates in 1971 to 60% by 2006.

"This is a shocking policy gap," says Ann Decter, YWCA Canada's Director of Advocacy and Public Policy. "We've completely ignored the changes in women's daily lives over the last 30 years, and sailed on as if it's still 1975. Women reversed the gender gap in higher education 20 years ago. Women surpassed men in paid employment in 2009. Where is the national policy response to support raising our children?"

"Early learning and child care is good for the economy because it helps parents work," says Andrea Calver, coordinator of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. "The numbers prove it. It's no surprise that provinces are moving forward at differing rates with partial schemes. But without the federal government, the response will be inadequate and patchwork."

“Underfunding of child care is neglect of low-income families,” says City Councilor Janet Davis. “The failure of the federal government to lead development of a national plan for child care services is a disgrace. Thousands wait for subsidies in Toronto alone. Families are stretched to the bone to cover costs and every year we scramble to save services. Where is the national leadership?”

Educated, Employed and Equal reports that the workforce is increasingly well-educated and more women than men are obtaining university and college educations, making a national plan to ensure comprehensive access to quality, affordable early learning and child care services essential to Canadian prosperity, a crucial support for children and parents and a common sense response to a changed society.

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For further information on YWCA Canada or to set up an interview with:

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- Councillor Janet Davis, Ward 3, phone 416-392-4035
- Andrea Calver, Coordinator, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, phone 416-434-8031

About YWCA Canada:

YWCA Canada is the country’s oldest and largest women's multi-service organization. With 33 Member Associations operating in more than 400 districts and communities across the country, our Turning Point Programs for Women™ - which address personal safety, economic security and well-being – reach out to 1 million women, girls and their families in nine provinces and one territory. YWCA is the largest national provider of shelter to women, serving 25,000 women, children and teen girls including 6,000 fleeing domestic violence each year. We are the largest provider of literacy, life skills, employment and counselling programs in the country, and the second largest provider of childcare services. YWCA Canada is a member association of the World YWCA which unites 25 million women and girls worldwide and spans 125 countries. For more information about YWCA Canada and our Member Associations, visit www.ywacacanada.ca or find us on Twitter @YWC_Canada or Facebook at www.facebook.com/ywacacanada.