

CHILD CARE FUND

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What is the Child Care Fund?

In 1995, CUPW negotiated the right to control and administer the \$2 million Child Care Fund.

Negotiations for cost-of-living increases to the Child Care Fund will ensure that the projects will continue to grow and be available to the members. By 2010, Canada Post will make quarterly deposits of \$324,000 into the fund.

The fund helps members who have the most difficulty finding and affording good child care:

- Early morning, night and evening shift workers;
- Part-timers;
- Workers with older children or children with special needs.

What are CUPW's objectives?

- To help members who have the most difficulty finding or affording high quality child care. This includes members who work irregular hours, need infant care, have children with special needs or require summer care for school age children;
- To create high quality, affordable child care. This includes creating innovative child care services, such as services that meet the needs of shift workers, and making existing quality services available and affordable;
- To work with our allies in the child care community to create high quality, non-profit child care services for postal workers.

What is the Child Care Fund used for?

The Fund is used for projects that provide child care services, as well as child care information programs, needs assessments and child care research.

The union has 15 Child Care Fund projects across Canada and Québec. Every region has at least one. All projects are community-based, non-profit and accommodate children with special needs. Each project provides at least one of the following services:

- Child care centres that accommodate irregular hours of work;
- Licensed care in the home of a caregiver to accommodate early morning starts, evening or night shifts;
- Short-term emergency child care for members whose child care arrangements break down unexpectedly;
- After school and summer care for school age children;
- Child care information, referral and resources;
- Two national projects across Canada and Québec for parents of children or their adult sons and daughters with special needs or disabilities.

Who does the Fund cover?

- Members and their dependent children (including children with special needs);
- Members with adult children with disabilities who are dependent on parents for care;
- Members who provide primary financial and residential support for their grandchildren.

Can the Fund meet all our Members' needs?

The Child Care Fund has helped some CUPW families find affordable, high quality child care. But the truth is, we would need a fund 50 times the size of the one we have to meet the diverse child care needs of all our members.

Setting up work-related child care services is only part of the solution to our child care problems. What we really need is a national child care system like other industrialized countries.

Good child care should not be a privilege for children of wealthy parents or a welfare measure for the children of low income parents. It should be available and affordable to everyone. Unions fought for many of the social programs we value today. Unions have a role to play in ensuring that we have programs like child care in the future.

One of the best ways we can do this is by working with groups that are fighting for a child care system that meets the needs of all parents.

Code Blue for child care is a Canada-wide campaign to build a real pan-Canadian child care system. Their goal is to build a universal, inclusive, comprehensive, high quality, community-based child care system that is accessible and provides early learning and development opportunities for ALL children.

What is the Union's Commitment to Child Care?

The union remains committed to fighting for a national child care program by working with local, provincial and national child care advocacy groups.

There's no question that we face a serious child care crisis in our society. For example, in 2004 there were an estimated 4.8 million children under the age of 12 and only about 745,000 regulated child care spaces. This means there were enough child care spaces for about 15.5% of children under 12. The biggest child care problem facing families is that there's not enough quality, affordable child care. Only a national child care policy or specific national legislation on child care, coupled with a large infusion of government funding, can solve this crisis.

Child Care is my Private Responsibility as a parent. Why did the Union get involved?

- The union believes we have a collective responsibility to take care of our children;
- Child care is part of good working conditions. Parents can work with peace of mind if they have good child care;
- Postal workers have a hard time finding good care that meets their job schedules. This puts an extra stress on them and their families. It's the union's responsibility to look after the members' social and economic well being;
- Child care is a family support. Without it, parents can't go to work;
- Child care is part of the bigger package of negotiated family supports that help working parents. This package includes child care, paid maternity and parental leave, special leave, and provisions regarding elder care;
- High quality child care for all children is part of building a better society. The CUPW and the rest of the labour movement have consistently fought for social programs and public services like medicare and public education, that benefit all members of society.

Why not just give me money directly from the Fund?

- There isn't enough money in the fund to support members' child care needs. For example, a flat rate entitlement would only come out to about \$10 per month for one year for all the children under 12;
- It doesn't help create and sustain high quality child-care services for postal workers in the long run. That's because the money goes to individuals rather than to programs specifically designed to meet our members' families' needs;
- There's no way to evaluate whether members' families have been helped substantially or to ensure the money was spent on child care expenses;

- It weakens our ability to move forward collectively on child care and the union's role in negotiating and providing education on child care issues;
- It promotes child care as a consumer item instead of a valuable public service;
- Child care subsidies are taxable so parents get even less value for the money.

Is the Union telling me what Child-Care Services I can and can't use?

No. Members are always free to make their own child care arrangements to meet their child care needs. But there simply aren't enough quality child care services to go around. The union is trying to increase parental choice through the Child Care Fund.

The union feels it has a responsibility to (i) support high quality child care services and (ii) help members gain access to and afford these services. The fund ties these two obligations together. It supports the expansion and/or creation of high quality services in the community through Child Care Fund projects and provides subsidies for project services.

Is the Union saying the Child Care Services I use now aren't good for my kids because they're not regulated by government and non-profit?

No. The union is not making judgments about individuals' child care arrangements. Research on child development has found that regulated, non-profit services tend toward high quality. This is because:

- They must conform to basic minimum standards of quality set by each province;
- All the money these programs receive gets used to improve quality, and wages and working conditions of caregivers instead of profit-making for operators.

I don't have any children (or, my children are grown up) so why should I support the Fund?

- Supporting quality child care benefits all of us because the long-term impact of good child care on children is enormous. They stand a much better chance of growing up to be adults who make a positive contribution to society instead of adults who need social and economic supports such as welfare, policing, social services and prisons;
- As workers, we know that every bargaining inroad we make benefits us collectively in the long run because it increases our solidarity to take on other issues in negotiations;
- Most of us will become parents or grandparents at some point and be directly affected by child care issues. Those of us whose children are grown can probably remember the child care problems we faced and how our families could have benefited from a provision like the Child Care Fund;
- We often support issues that might not directly affect us, or might only affect us occasionally or during a specific period in our lives, because they have a broader positive social impact (for example, publicly funded education, medicare, and pensions).