

## Still marching: International Women's Day and the demand for universal child care <sup>[1]</sup>

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Author: Childcare Resource and Research Unit <sup>[2]</sup>

In 2021, feminists and child care advocates continue to advocate for universal child care as a key tenet of women's equality, as they participate in International Women's Day marches across the country, continuing to highlight the unfinished business <sup>[3]</sup> of women's equality and universal child care.



### International Women's Day in history

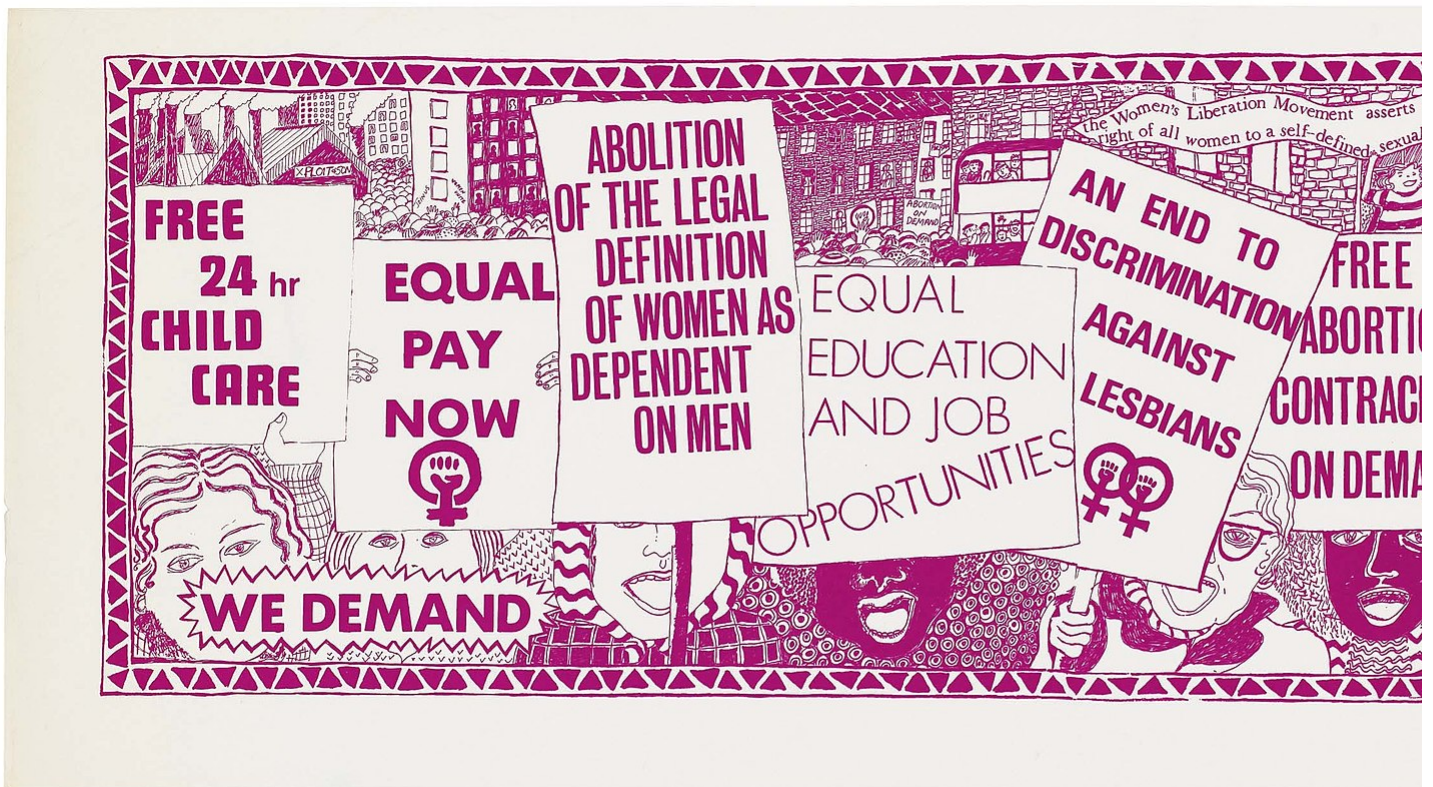
Primarily organized by labour and socialist movements, the first Women's Day was held in New York City on February 28 1909. In 1910, the International Socialist Women's Conference, lead by Clara Zetkin, a German delegate, resolved that Women's Day would occur every year. It was celebrated for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Switzerland and Germany on March 19, 1911. Initially, there was not a set date in March for IWD, but March 8th was eventually adopted after it became a national holiday in the Soviet Union to commemorate the women's "bread and peace" strike in Russia in 1917.

March 8th was declared International Women's Day by the United Nations, which adopted a resolution to celebrate it in 1977, and is celebrated in many countries around the world today.



[4]

When universal child care began to be identified as a key feminist objective in the 1960s and 1970s, it became a demand in International Women's Day marches and other feminist political actions across many countries.



[5]

Interesting fact: "Bread and Roses", a song attributed to a textile mill strike in Lawrence Kansas in 1912, became an anthem of the women's rights movement.

Video: Women of the World presents Bread and Roses [6]

## The history of International Women's Day in Canada

Although Canada has a history of feminism that stretches back before the turn of the 20th century, International Women's Day only began to be celebrated widely in Canada in the 1970s. At that time, universal child care quickly became one of the key demands, along with abortion rights, pay equity and ending violence against women.



**No to the wage freeze!**

**Decent wages!**  
**Equal work,  
equal pay!**

**WOMEN HOLD  
UP HALF  
THE SKY**

**Paid maternity leaves  
and free day-care  
centers!**

**No to the cost of  
living increases and  
the budgets cuts in  
social welfare!**



Today International Women's Day in Canada is celebrated by marches and public events in cities across Canada every year, as it now is in most countries. Groups of all varieties use it as a time to make political demands for women's equality and for women's issues such as universal child care.



**Women's economic equality depends on affordable child care for all.**





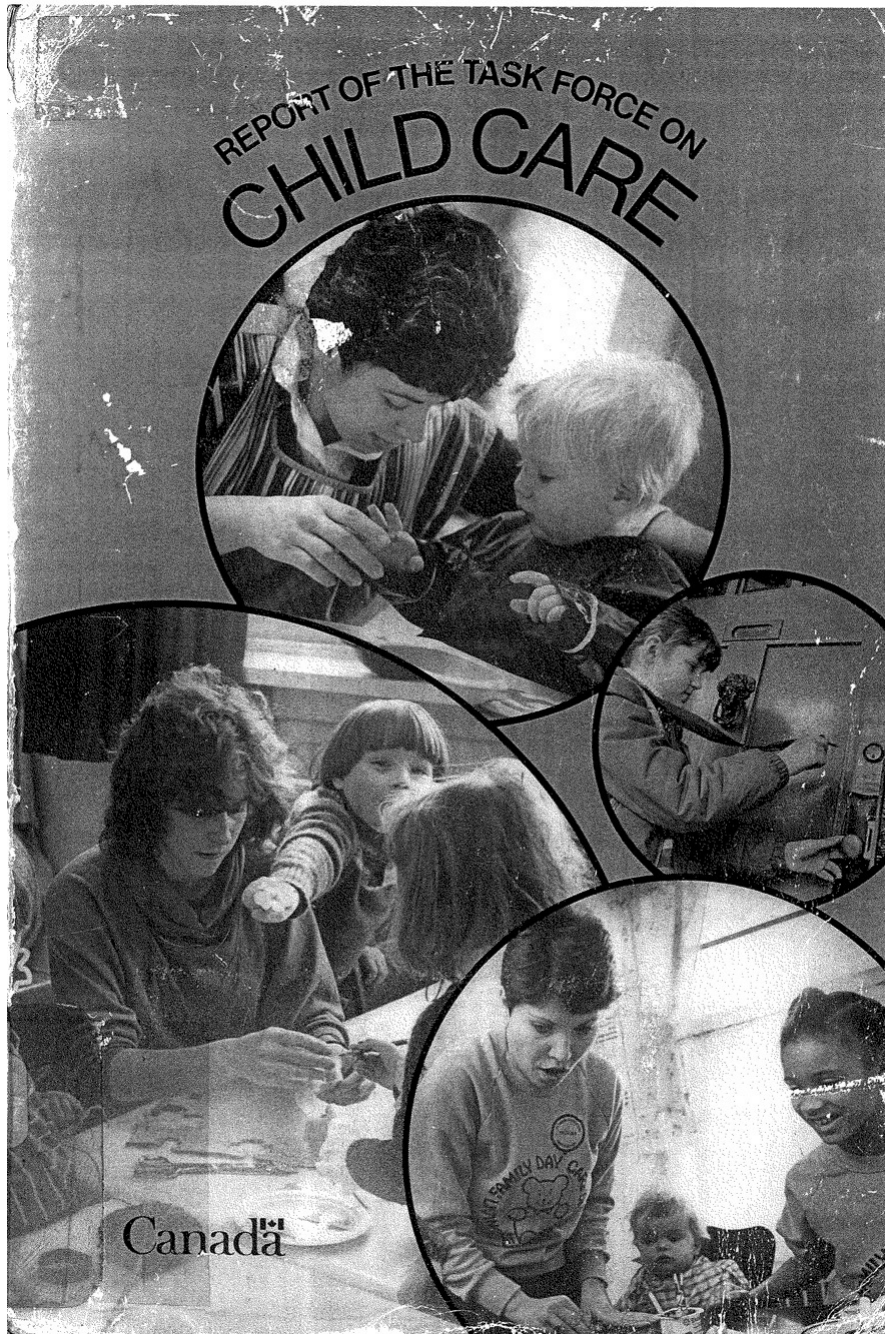
<sup>[11]</sup>

Other resources:

1981 International Women's Day Toronto chants <sup>[12]</sup>

YWCA Saskatoon: Recognizing childcare on International Women's Day and every day <sup>[13]</sup>

## The Task Force on Child Care



The Report of the Task Force on Child Care, Canada's only comprehensive federal child care report, was released on International Women's Day 1986. The Task Force on Child Care, known as the "Katie Cooke Task Force" was set up by Pierre Trudeau's government in 1984 to report to then Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Judy Erola. Four members – all experts in their fields – made up the Task Force: Katie Cooke, Jack London, Renée Edwards and Ruth Rose-Lizée. The task force members initiated 25 background research projects, collected information about family policy in 20 countries, solicited responses from parents through a flyer in the October 1984 Family Allowance cheque, and had 7000 parents and more than 200 organizations make submissions to the group with visits and hearings were held in five cities.

On International Women's Day in 1986, the Minister for the Status of Women for the Progressive Conservative government of the day held a press release to mark International Women's Day by releasing the first, and only, federal study of the need for child care. Minister McLean said: "As we look at this Report, we have our eye on the year 2000. I'm personally committed to finding a workable solution to Canada's childcare challenge" (Globe and Mail, 1986).

The 400 page final report called for "complementary systems of child care and parental leave as comprehensive, accessible and competent as the health care and education systems". This universal system of care would have affordable parent fees, be designed and managed by the provinces under national standards and would be built through a gradual increase in the supply of regulated child care until the year 2001 when it would serve all children and families.

Despite their initial enthusiasm, the change in government to the Mulroney Conservatives marked a shift in priorities and 35 years later, most of the report's recommendations have still not been acted upon.

For more information on the Task Force, see CRRU's 2006 briefing note *It was twenty years ago today...March 8, 1986* <sup>[15]</sup>

# DID YOU KNOW...

ON MARCH 8, 1986 A LANDMARK FEDERAL REPORT...

ON 1WD 1986, A LANDMARK FEDERAL RE  
UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE SYSTEM.

ITS 53 RECOMMENDATIONS WERE BASED  
AND 25 BACKGROUND REPORTS.

IT SAID "...SOUND CHILD CARE AND P  
A FRILL BUT A FUNDAMENTAL SUPPORT F  
IT RECOMMENDED, IN THE LONG TERM, A  
OF LICENSED CHILD CARE FULLY FUNDED  
PUBLIC REVENUES".

CANT HAVE

EQUAL  
FOR EVERY



CRRU's 2020 IWD card <sup>[16]</sup>

## More Resources

### Readings

Report of the Task Force on Child Care <sup>[14]</sup>

It was twenty years ago today...March 8, 1986 <sup>[15]</sup>

CRRU Blog: Think child care is no longer a women's issue? <sup>[17]</sup>

### Films

Status Quo? The Unfinished Business of Feminism in Canada <sup>[3]</sup>

A struggle to remember: Fighting for our families <sup>[18]</sup>

National Film Board: International Women's Day film selection <sup>[19]</sup>

Rise UP! Feminist Digital Archives: film selection <sup>[20]</sup>

### Websites

Government of Canada's 2021 IWD information <sup>[21]</sup>

Canadian Women's Foundation IWD 2021 <sup>[22]</sup>

UN Women IWD 2021 <sup>[23]</sup>

Rise UP! Feminist Digital Archives: Campaigning for child care <sup>[24]</sup>

Source URL (modified on 12 Aug 2021): <https://childcarecanada.org/blog/still-marching-international-women%E2%80%99s-day-and-demand-universal-child-care>

### Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/blog/still-marching-international-women%E2%80%99s-day-and-demand-universal-child-care> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/blog/author/childcare-resource-and-research-unit> [3] [https://www.nfb.ca/film/status\\_quo\\_the\\_unfinished\\_business\\_of\\_feminism/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/status_quo_the_unfinished_business_of_feminism/) [4] <https://firstclassse.com.my/history-of-international-womens-day/> [5] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Women%27s\\_Day#/media/File:7\\_Demands\\_\(1974\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Women%27s_Day#/media/File:7_Demands_(1974).jpg) [6] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94mSln34ZwA> [7] [https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/culture/photos/iwd-demo-1983\\_83031/](https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/culture/photos/iwd-demo-1983_83031/) [8] <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=dY80AAAIBAJ&sjid=R-IFAAAAIBAJ&pg=2682.6113109&dq=international-women%27s-day+canada&hl=en> [9] <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/culture/photos/still-aint-satisfied-toronto-iwd-1985/> [10] <https://www.childcareontario.org/iwd2014> [11] <http://psacunion.ca/sites/psac/files/attachments/pdfs/psac-iwd-poster-11x17-en.pdf> [12] <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/wp-content/uploads/iwd-toronto-chants-1981-ocr-4.pdf> [13] <https://www.ywcaskatoon.com/recognizing-childcare-on-international-womens-day-and-every-day/> [14] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/18/12/report-task-force-child-care> [15] <https://childcarecanada.org/publications/briefing-notes/06/03/it-was-twenty-years-ago-today-march-8-1986> [16] [https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/CRRU\\_IWD\\_2020\\_PDF.pdf](https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/CRRU_IWD_2020_PDF.pdf) [17] <https://childcarecanada.org/blog/think-child-care-no-longer-women%E2%80%99s-issue> [18] <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/culture/films/a-struggle-to-remember-fighting-for-our-families/> [19] <https://blog.nfb.ca/blog/2013/02/27/international-womens-day-films/> [20] <https://riseuparchive.wpeengine.com/culture/films/> [21] <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/commemorations-celebrations/international-womens-day.html> [22] <https://canadianwomen.org/international-womens-day-2021/> [23] <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/international-womens-day> [24] <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/issues-actions/child-care/>