5. Years of Turmoil, 1979–82

A New System for Day Care Is Born

The events between 1979 and 1982 are more closely scrutinized in this book than events in any other period. This is partly because the political struggles are so compelling but mainly because the policy decisions were so momentous. Bob Bogle, a southern Alberta teacher who had first been elected to the provincial legislature in 1975, was appointed the new minister of Social Services and Community Health (SSCH) shortly after the government of Peter Lougheed crushed the opposition in the provincial election of 14 March 1979. Although in the previous cabinet, Bogle had been a minister without portfolio responsible for Native Affairs, his new assignment in 1979 did not impress the leader of the Alberta New Democratic Party (NDP), Grant Notley, who stated, “It’s obvious that Social Services are being downgraded.” Notley probably did not know that at least a few Tory insiders were touting the young and energetic Bogle as a rising star in the cabinet, perhaps even the heir apparent of Premier Peter Lougheed himself.¹

Bob Bogle was an active minister who set a fundamentally new course for day care in Alberta. Specifically, he ended the provincial-municipal partnership in day care for preschool children, introduced and then substantially improved a system of operating allowances that promoted the rapid expansion of commercial day care spaces in urban areas, and cancelled the government’s commitment to require training for day care workers. The main legacy of the Bogle years is the infrastructure of aging commercial day cares in urban areas, particularly Calgary and Edmonton. Many of these centres were built to take advantage of the high rates of return on investment that were virtually guaranteed by the provincial government’s generous operating allowances. Chapter 6 will analyze the expansion of commercial day care in Alberta in the 1980s and 1990s: how it happened, what profits were made, how the provincial government reacted to the
emergence of day care chains in Calgary, and the consequences of commercial expansion for the overall day care system.

This chapter is concerned with the policy initiatives between 1979 and 1982 that laid the groundwork for day care in Alberta in the 1980s and beyond. My goals are to explain why certain policy initiatives were taken while others were abandoned and to analyze how the advocates for quality child care in Alberta were largely marginalized during these years. The chapter concludes by comparing the day care system that took shape in Alberta between 1979 and 1982 with the systems found in Sweden and Texas at about the same time. Alberta’s new approach to day care had a number of unique elements. Nevertheless, in terms of its essential features, Alberta’s new system was like that found in Texas, just as Alberta’s old system of PSS day cares was similar to that of Sweden. This reflected an important shift in the type of liberal welfare regime pursued by the provincial government.

BOB BOGLE’S STYLE AND SYMPATHIES

The new minister of SSH quickly proved himself to be confrontational and headlong in style, and eager to chart a new policy direction in day care that emanated from commercial operators and their supporters on the backbenches of the Tory caucus.

Right from the start of his term, Bogle seemed to harbour a disdain for the intricacies of day care policy issues and a certain disrespect for the civil servants working in the area. Two of the bureaucrats who worked on day care in SSH at that time have argued that the minister was unable to work with civil servants in a collegial and respectful fashion. Apparently he interpreted critical comments by civil servants as having an ulterior political motive rather than as an attempt to improve policy and programs. This was seen during the 1980 review of the Preventive Social Service (PSS) program that preceded its replacement by the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program in June 1981. Bogle’s political assistant, Catharine Arthur, issued an “edict” that only supportive/constructive advice and commentary were welcome from civil servants. The expectation was that any reservations or negative opinions would not be communicated. In this context, when reservations or negative opinions were expressed, they were judged as an attempt to undermine the government and as lacking good professional intent. At least one mid-level manager who defied
the edict during the PSS review was summarily transferred from his position in the department.²

Given his distrust of civil servants, it is not surprising to learn that Minister Bogle’s political assistants, Catharine Arthur and Gordon Thomas, played very important roles inside the department. In fact, both were moved into senior civil service jobs. Arthur became an associate deputy minister and the chair of the department’s executive council in early 1983 and Thomas became the director of FCSS. When the department was reorganized on a regional basis in 1981, some of the regional manager positions were likewise filled by political insiders rather than career civil servants. One of the unintended consequences of these political appointments was that the appointees tended to stay in the same job for an inordinate length of time, simply because they were judged as unqualified for other positions at the same or higher levels. For example, Gordon Thomas remained as director of FCSS for approximately a decade.

Provincial civil servants had been working to incrementally improve day care standards over time throughout the 1970s and had enjoyed professional working relationships with the two ministers who had preceded Bob Bogle, Neil Crawford and Helen Hunley.¹ Long-time civil servant John Lackey immediately recognized the threat to the incremental approach posed by Bogle’s intention to let backbench Tory MLAs play a leading role in reviewing and initiating changes to the day care program. A memo from early May 1979 analyzed the role of the Saskatchewan day care advisory board (established in 1975) and offered arguments in favour of establishing such an advisory board in Alberta. The memo envisioned an advisory board “with representatives with day care expertise from the varying sectors” along the same lines as the Day Care Task Force of 1977. It also systematically outlined how such an advisory board would be superior to the proposed MLA Review Committee. The memo concluded with strong support for the establishment of an advisory board, “possibly as an alternative to the proposed MLA Committee.” This was an audacious bureaucratic initiative to try and abort Bob Bogle’s plan for a one-sided, backbenchers’ review of day care.

More memos followed in June. One analyzed the history of the Ontario advisory council on day care that existed between 1974 and 1976. A second indicated strong support for the establishment of an Alberta advisory committee even if the MLA Review Committee did proceed. John Lackey wrote:

I think an independent—but relating to government—Committee could do much to defuse the current situation in Day Care. It could be an excellent neutral
sounding board for all parts of the daycare system, assist with better information distribution and generally act as a knowledgeable catalyst for the incremental change that is inevitable in the daycare system during the next five years.4

The last sentence clearly presented the bureaucratic vision of incremental change, a vision that civil servants justifiably feared might be rejected by the new minister if he listened too closely to backbench Tory MLAs and the commercial operators who were strongly lobbying those MLAs. The advisory committee was eventually established in 1980 and survived until 1986. However, it did not even start its work until after the committee of Tory backbenchers had completed its review and Minister Bogle had decided to make fundamental changes to day care in Alberta. Bureaucratic resistance proved futile to this strong-willed minister, who dreamt that reform of day care could be one of his springboards to the premier’s office.

Among opponents of the Lougheed government, Bob Bogle became a favourite target of criticism. By the spring of 1980, his name had become synonymous, at least in the letters pages of the Edmonton Journal, with mismanagement. Following the 2 November 1982 provincial election, the Calgary Herald editorialized that Bogle was one of two members of the old cabinet who “should not find places in the new.”5 Yet it does a disservice to the complex day care politics of 1979–82 to explain what happened solely as the consequence of the force and faults of the minister’s personality. It was Bob Bogle’s ideological affinities with commercial day care owners that played a more important role during these years than the dogmatism, suspicion, anti-intellectualism, and confrontation that marked his management style. The Lougheed government had come to power in 1971 with the strong support of urban voters in Edmonton and Calgary who were supportive of progressive action on day care. The minister from 1971 to 1975, Neil Crawford, was elected from Edmonton and was thus very aware of the political importance of the urban new middle class, along with urban workers. Bogle had run in the 1971 election but had been defeated by a Social Credit candidate. In the 1979 election, Social Credit won only 19.9 percent of the popular vote across the province and elected but four members. A large proportion of the free enterprise conservatives who had formerly supported Social Credit had switched their allegiance to the Tories by 1979. Bogle aligned himself with the free enterprise lobby in day care and put his considerable energies and ambitions to work for them. He undoubtedly believed in their cause, but he would have also seen them as a significant group of potential supporters in any run he might make for the leadership of the Tory party.
Bob Bogle became minister of SSCH approximately one year after his predecessor, Helen Hunley, announced that the province would partner with willing municipalities to subsidize the day care costs of low-income Albertans through a portable subsidy program. She predicted that 40 percent of the families with children in commercial centres would qualify for subsidization. A year later, Edmonton, unlike other major municipalities, had still not agreed to become a partner in the new subsidy program. This was the first pressing day care issue that the new minister had to address.

Two groups who were unhappy with the situation were commercial operators and their clients. The Edmonton Independent Day Care Operators Association launched a petition drive in April 1979 and organized a rally on 16 May. The petition protested the possibility that the City of Edmonton would be allowed to impose supplementary quality-of-care standards on commercial centres before parents in those centres could receive subsidization. It was posted in twenty-two commercial centres and concluded, “We are happy with the respective centres we now use.”6 At the time of the rally, Bogle’s assistant, Catharine Arthur, stated that “parents are understandably angry because they haven’t received day-care fee subsidies promised to them a year ago.”

Those involved with Edmonton’s fifteen PSS day care centres also mobilized at the time. They sought to win funding concessions from the province that would allow the centres to maintain the high standard of care they had offered under the PSS system of deficit funding. In late May, the Edmonton Day Care Council, composed of the directors and non-profit operators of the PSS centres, lobbied the eighteen MLAs elected for Edmonton.7

David Gilbert remained the director of Edmonton’s Day Care Branch in 1979–80. He remembered the commercial operators in Edmonton having the provincial government’s ear although they were not as well organized as those in Calgary. They certainly had much better access to MLAs than advocates from the not-for-profit sector. Gilbert recalled that Edmonton’s not-for-profit directors were told that cabinet ministers did not want to talk with them, but those same ministers continued to meet with commercial day care owners. This was certainly bad for the Lougheed government’s political image since, as Gilbert noted, “it would have appeared more open if they had at least met with both sides.” The fact that Bogle and other cabinet ministers were, at one point, not even willing to talk to non-profit advocates left no doubt that their ideological
loyalties lay firmly in the camp of the business owners who ran day cares on a commercial basis.

In the early spring of 1979, the Day Care Branch raised the possibility of the city ending all involvement in day care rather than accepting the terms of the new provincial program. It argued, “The provincial proposal essentially changes the status of day care from that of a preventive social service developed by a municipality in response to local needs to a provincial program, with provincially determined standards and under provincial control, but with the option of municipal administration.” To exercise that option, the city would have to pay 20 percent of the costs of the provincial program. In justifying the withdrawal option, the Day Care Branch drew “a parallel ... with child welfare and social assistance services”: in the past, these had been “areas of considerable municipal responsibility,” but the province had assumed full responsibility for the former in the mid-1960s and the latter in the mid-1970s, and now regarded them as “statutory services.” “Day care, except for expectation of municipal cost-sharing, appears now to be considered by provincial authorities in the same light.” This would seem to be a very prescient analysis given the Lougheed government’s decision to end all municipal involvement in preschool day care in 1980. Nevertheless, I will argue later in this section that the end of municipal participation in Alberta’s day care programs was far from inevitable; rather, it was the result of the conjunction of a small number of determining factors.

The question of refusing to participate in the provincial day care program was debated by Edmonton City Council in April 1979. By a narrow margin of two votes, council decided to continue negotiating with the province “after several aldermen, including Lois Campbell and Ron Hayter, warned the City would be foolish to abandon its day-care involvement and allow children to face the consequences.” Senior bureaucrats for the province and city met in early June to look for common ground. Shortly before this, however, Minister Bogle stated that he would not negotiate provincial day care standards with Edmonton and “criticized Edmonton’s publicly-funded Glengarry day-care centre, saying it had the highest per capita costs in the province.” When Bogle met with Mayor Cec Purves on 12 June, it came as no surprise that he was unwilling “to allow the City special concessions with respect to conditions or criteria that would amend or contravene the Day Care Regulation.” Nevertheless, the city’s representatives left the meeting with the understanding that for the next four years, the province would continue to cover 80 percent of the deficits for all aspects of the city’s PSS day care program. It was on this basis that city council voted on 15 August 1979.
to join the provincial day care system effective 1 January 1980, although the city declined the opportunity to assume responsibility for licensing day cares. This left Calgary as the only municipality that had taken over licensing.11

Any goodwill created by Edmonton’s reluctant decision to join the new day care system was very short lived. Between August and October, Bob Bogle and Mayor Cec Purves engaged in a correspondence that ended on a very acrimonious note. Purves’ notification of Edmonton’s decision to join the provincial program had stated his “understanding ... that the cost of quality day care will be shared 80 percent by the Government of Alberta during the transition period [until 1983]” and had listed a number of outstanding issues, resolution of which “is urgent.” The most surprising issue on the list was “Municipal requirements for commercial Day Care Centres,” since this issue had not been minuted in Purves’ 12 June meeting with Bogle. It was as if the mayor thought that by joining the new day care system, he could immediately win further concessions from the minister. Given that Minister Bogle was, if nothing else, dogmatic, this proved to be a colossal miscalculation: the city’s attempt to continue negotiating the non-negotiable backfired.12

Bob Bogle replied to Purves on 17 September 1979, stating, “There still seems to be some misunderstanding about the terms of the Provincial Day Care Program.” His first clarification was that the province would not continue to cover 80 percent of the deficit in Edmonton’s community day care program until 1983 but would step down its contribution in each of the next three years. The minutes of the 12 June meeting are ambiguous on this question, but both Mayor Purves and Edmonton’s commissioner of public affairs, A.H. Savage, were convinced that Bogle had agreed to the 80 percent deal. The mayor’s language on this issue was very blunt and inflammatory. In his first reply, he stated, “I don’t understand how Commissioner Savage and myself could have misinterpreted the content of our discussions together” and indicated that Bogle’s position was “of grave concern.” His second reply accused the minister of misleading him on the matter and threatened to re-examine the city’s involvement in the day care program.13

I have no way of knowing whether this dispute occurred simply because the province and city misunderstood each other at the 12 June meeting. A second possibility is that Bogle was purposefully vague about the deficit funding phase-out as part of his negotiating strategy. There is also a possibility that, given Minister Bogle’s confrontational style, he decided to “stick” Edmonton with a larger share of the deficit as a “reward” for continuing to dispute issues that the
province had clearly indicated were not open for discussion. In support of the last of these three possibilities, we know that in November 1979, Catarina Versaevel wrote to PSS directors and indicated that each PSS program could come up with its own plan to phase out deficit funding of day cares up to 1983, and in February 1980, the department policy was recorded thus: “PSS centres have until March 31, 1983 to phase-out existent deficit with no explicit formula and/or imposed provincial procedures.” There is no doubt, therefore, that in September 1979, Minister Bogle was imposing a unique condition on Edmonton rather than applying an established department policy on the phase-out of deficits in PSS day cares. As a consequence, the partnership between the provincial government and Edmonton on the new subsidy system got off to a decidedly rocky start.14

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, commercial operators and their clientele were worried that the City of Edmonton would somehow limit their access to the province’s subsidy money. This fear seems justified by Mayor Purves’ mention of “Municipal requirements for Commercial Day Care Centres.” Bob Bogle’s reply on this question was unambiguous:

I would like to reaffirm that under the terms of the Family Subsidy Program the issuing of a provincial license automatically qualifies a private centre for participation in the program. There can be no phase-in for private centres. All centres licensed, publicly funded and private, can expect to receive the family subsidy effective January 1, 1980.15

This kind of language would have been music to the ears of commercial operators. It is important to note that Minister Bogle’s uncompromising line on this matter was a departure from the position taken by the department at the very end of Helen Hunley’s tenure as minister. Prior to Bogle’s appointment, provincial bureaucrats had encouraged and expected municipalities to play an important role in pressuring poor-quality commercial centres to improve the quality of care, lest those centres be denied subsidized children.16

When it came to the issue of standards, the City of Edmonton proved to be just as uncompromising as Bob Bogle. In the fall of 1979, Edmonton Social Services (ESS) prepared a set of policy guidelines for the family subsidy program. Among those guidelines was a requirement that “the Operator or staff shall not discipline a child through the use of corporal punishment.” ESS felt it necessary to include this guideline since the 1978 Alberta Day Care Regulation ignored the issue of child discipline. On 17 January 1980 and again on 11 February 1980, the province requested
that the city delete the requirement. In doing so, it implicitly defended the right of
day care staff to use corporal punishment. The city refused to delete the require-
ment and creatively defended its position by quoting from a 1975 memo written by
Duncan Rogers, then the acting deputy minister of Alberta Social Services, stating
that corporal punishment “is not condoned by this Department.”

The Day Care Branch circulated the draft guidelines to commercial operators
on 9 November 1979. In a covering letter, David Gilbert wrote, “I know day care
has been a controversial subject in this city for quite some time. However, we
must now work together in the best interest of the children and families in this
community.” A total of ninety-five commercial operators were invited to par-
ticipate in the family subsidy program. By the middle of January, however, only
twenty-one of these operators had signed participation agreements, presumably
because the majority of operators found one or more of the city’s requirements
to be onerous. This meant that the vast majority of families whose children
qualified for day care subsidies were still not collecting those subsidies in the
middle of January, even though the new system was officially up and running in
Edmonton from 1 January 1980.

This was a crucial moment in the history of day care since the committee of
backbench Conservative MLAs was completing its comprehensive review of all
aspects of the day care system, and Bob Bogle was considering his options on
how to proceed with regulatory, administrative, and funding changes. At exactly
the same time, many commercial operators in Edmonton were complaining
about the conditions to which they had to agree in order to participate in the sub-
sidy program. Furthermore, numerous low-income parents were undoubtedly
displeased that they had not yet received the subsidy that had been promised.

Minister Bogle demonstrated his concern with the situation in Edmonton
in late January, when he indicated that the provincial government might have to
“move unilaterally to provide assistance to Edmonton residents who are entitled
to day care subsidies.” The City of Edmonton’s principled opposition to the
province’s new day care system had caused it to raise policy issues like corporal
punishment in the midst of establishing administrative procedures and had led
it to be content with involving only a minority of commercial operators at the
onset of the system. By the middle of February 1980, only about a third of the
commercial operators in the city had joined. From the standpoint of day care
programming, these were sensible positions, but from a political standpoint,
they merely strengthened the hand of those who saw day care as a custodial ser-
vice best run by commercial interests.
Even after the problem of Edmonton’s non-participation in the family subsidy system was solved, ESS continued to be a thorn in Bogle’s side. My contention is that Edmonton provoked a reaction from the provincial government by constantly placing political and administrative roadblocks in the way of the timely implementation of the family subsidy plan. If the city had joined the plan earlier and/or if the city had taken steps to ensure that low-income families received subsidies as soon as the plan began, there is a reasonable chance that the province would have continued to treat day care as a joint responsibility with municipalities.

Provincial civil servants learned that Bogle was contemplating a major change in the day care system when, on February 11, 1980, he raised “tentative directions” that emanated from the MLA Review Committee chaired by Charles Anderson. At a meeting on February 18, Anderson listed the five principles recommended by his committee:

1. The province should provide 100% funding.
2. The [province] should license day care facilities.
3. If municipalities wish to provide care beyond the basic regulation level, they should provide the necessary extra funding.
4. Stop deficit PSS funded centres as quickly as possible.
5. Reduce and simplify the subsidy application procedures and simplify and streamline the wording in the Regulation.21

This information makes it clear that the Government of Alberta ended its partnerships with municipalities in the administration of day care on the recommendation of the MLA Review Committee. Minister Bogle was completely in tune with the thinking of his Tory colleagues on the committee, so he not only accepted this recommendation but almost immediately began implementing it. The province announced the end of municipal involvement in the provincial day care system on 29 April and began the new system on 1 August 1980. It is also noteworthy that the government announced its new direction before it had made plans for the future of satellite family day home (FDH) programs and out-of-school care (OOSC) programs, thus creating considerable problems for itself in subsequent months.22

In analyzing this dramatic shift in the direction of day care in Alberta, a shift that reversed fifteen years of joint municipal-provincial responsibility, the key question is this: what is the underlying reason for the review committee’s recommendation and Bob Bogle’s hasty implementation of that recommendation?
One possible explanation is that the MLA Review Committee was simply bringing day care into line with a general program shift away from municipal involvement in the funding and administration of social services. A proponent of this explanation is a former day care director for Edmonton, David Gilbert, who argued in an interview: “I think that what happened was that the province had a much larger social services agenda at the time. I think that if they’d shared it with us, we would have understood where it was they were going.” In Gilbert’s view, the trend toward provincial control of social services, which dated back to the 1960s, was supported by two specific factors in 1979–80. First, the Lougheed government had decided, after being in power for two terms, “that it was easier to run the province … based upon the corporate management style than it was to have local community involvement.” Second, the chief deputy minister of SSCH, Stanley Mansbridge, had come to Edmonton from Ottawa and had a broad provincial perspective on programs.

This is an interesting and plausible explanation for why the province decided to arbitrarily end its partnership with municipalities in preschool day care, but it is unsupported by documented evidence. Prior to 1980, neither the political nor administrative branches of the provincial state had formulated plans for day care that would exclude municipalities. Indeed, there was no discussion whatsoever of this policy shift prior to Minister Bogle’s “tentative directions” of 11 February 1980. Consequently, I am certain that this policy initiative did not originate with Mansbridge or any other provincial civil servant. Furthermore, the cabinet never discussed the change, either prior to or after 11 February, indicating that this was likely not a top-down initiative of the Lougheed government.

A second possible explanation for the decision to end municipal responsibilities in the provincial day care system is citizen complaints. Specifically, it is possible that citizens in many parts of the province were complaining to the provincial government because their local governments were unwilling to join the subsidy system and hence they could not obtain a day care subsidy. Ray Petrovitsch, co-owner of Happy Day Care in Calgary and past president of the Private Day Care Society of Alberta (PDCS), offered this rationale in early May 1980, and so did the minister. While this also seems plausible, the facts suggest otherwise. Thirty-two municipalities had signed subsidy agreements by 1980, including all of Alberta’s major cities. Furthermore, by the middle of 1979, the new portable day care subsidy system had provoked “increased municipal involvement in day care services,” with many small municipalities having contacted the provincial Day Care Unit about possible involvement, including
municipalities that had not set up day care services under the PSS program.\textsuperscript{24} It is reasonable to conclude that within a couple of years, access to day care subsidies would have been almost province-wide and that special arrangements could have been made to assist those relatively few citizens who lived in communities that decided against joining the system. On this latter point, it is noteworthy that in 1979 municipalities and the province were discussing whether a municipality that had joined the provincial plan could make arrangements to subsidize the day care costs of families who lived in an adjacent municipality.\textsuperscript{25}

In my view, the problem of access to day care subsidies in rural parts of Alberta was a convenient justification for ending municipal involvement in day care rather than a determinant of policy change. If the problem had been generating a great deal of dissatisfaction in the province, civil servants would have highlighted it in their internal communications in 1979. It is significant that this problem was not listed among the “contentious day care issues” in the briefing notes prepared for Minister Bogle prior to the fall 1979 session of the provincial legislature.\textsuperscript{26}

While the preceding two explanations are suspect, a third explanation for the ending of municipal involvement has a great deal of support: Bogle and the MLA Review Committee were simply reforming the day care system along the lines suggested by commercial day care operators in Calgary and Edmonton. The idea that a single interest group had captured a democratic government’s policy agenda should be treated with considerable suspicion, especially on an issue like day care where competing interest groups are well defined and have considerable public support. But for three reasons, this is precisely what happened in Alberta in 1979–80. First, the Lougheed government decimated the opposition parties in the election of March 1979, repeating its previous election success in 1975. This made ministers like Bob Bogle less likely to pay attention to interest groups that usually aligned themselves with opposition parties. Second, whereas civil servants often act to ensure that the ideas and concerns of prominent interest groups are fairly presented in policy discussions, in this case an MLA Review Committee was allowed to formulate a plan without the checks and balances of bureaucratic input. And, third, the minister shared the free enterprise zeal of commercial day care operators to make major changes to the day care system. As a consequence, while advocacy groups like the AAYC enjoyed less influence during the Lougheed government’s second term (1975–79) than in its first term (1971–75), during Bob Bogle’s tenure, their influence became almost negligible.\textsuperscript{27}
There is a great deal of evidence that commercial operators had unprecedented access to and influence on Bob Bogle from 1979 to 1982. Some of this evidence is relatively innocuous, such as a reporter’s observations in May 1980 that “private operators, who run most day-care centres in the province, seem to have caught the minister’s ear with the arguments for change” and that they gave “Bogle nothing but praise” after he announced the end of municipal involvement in the day care system on 29 April.\textsuperscript{28} Earlier in this chapter, I provided evidence that Bogle favoured commercial operators over non-profit advocates in the 1979 struggle over the terms of Edmonton’s participation in the new subsidy system. Further proof of the cozy relationship between Bogle and commercial operators will be outlined in my discussions of operating allowances and staff training programs later in this chapter. At this point, I will examine a day care licensing appeal that occurred at exactly the same time as Bogle accepted the recommendations of the MLA Review Committee. This incident again suggests that the minister had very strong sympathies for the commercial sector.

The dispute involved an Edmonton commercial day care that had recently been sold. Under the previous ownership, this day care had been operating according to the standards in place prior to the 1978 Regulation. Upon the change in ownership, however, it was legally required to adhere to the new standards. Furthermore, the new owner applied for an increase in the licensed capacity. Routine inspections were carried out and reported to the director of licensing, Pieter de Groot. He decided that he could not approve a license since day care consultants had concerns about the quality of the program, licensing inspectors advised that the day care did not meet the new standards, and the fire inspector would not approve the proposed increase in capacity.

Pieter de Groot’s decision was quickly appealed and Minister Bogle established a three-person appeal committee, the chair of which was none other than Jacqui Kallal, head of the Edmonton branch of the PDCS. The appointment of a commercial operator as the chair was referred to by the president of the Alberta Association for Young Children (AAYC), Michael Phair, as a “conflict of interest.” Indeed, at the time, Kallal was herself disputing a decision by Pieter de Groot concerning the size of her operation.\textsuperscript{29}

Kallal’s appointment to the appeal board is further confirmation of the very close relations between Minister Bogle and the PDCS. It also calls into question the judgement of the minister, since he failed to recognize that the appeal board’s finding would be tainted by the perception that its chair could not render an impartial judgement. Bogle could have diffused this criticism by ensuring
that the other two appointees to the appeal board had professional expertise in early childhood education (ECE) or day care, but he failed to do so.30

I have already detailed the frustration that both commercial operators and Minister Bogle felt at the slow implementation of the family subsidy program in Edmonton. In general, commercial operators in Edmonton and Calgary were apprehensive about municipal involvement in the day care system. Because both cities had long supported quality care, they could be counted on to continue to do so within the limited roles they had in the new system. For instance, Edmonton linked its day care subsidy program to a ban on corporal punishment despite repeated requests from the province not to do so. Furthermore, the provincial Day Care Unit suggested that Calgary’s licensing inspectors were monitoring the Day Care Regulation more closely than were provincial inspectors.31 For commercial operators, eliminating municipal involvement in day care administration was the next best thing to lowering standards or even deregulation.

Indeed, the relaxation of government oversight and regulatory standards was the fifth recommendation of the MLA Review Committee, which read, “reduce and simplify the subsidy application procedures and simplify and streamline the wording in the Regulation.” The perspective of commercial operators is unmistakable in this recommendation given the general tendency of business owners, day care owners included, to treat reasonable regulatory distinctions and expectations as red tape.

My conclusion, then, is that municipalities were phased out of preschool day care in 1980 not because of any long-term reorientation of social services in Alberta, not because of a centralized directive from the inner cabinet, and not because of a public relations crisis caused by the failure of some small municipalities to join the provincial system, but rather because commercial operators found a minister who shared their free enterprise ideology and who, over the course of his first year on the job, developed a personal antipathy toward the municipal day care program run by the City of Edmonton. It might very well be the case that there was nothing Edmonton could have done to change the outcome, given the highly ideological cast of Bob Bogle’s actions. But it seems likely that had the portable subsidy system been working efficiently in Edmonton during the time of the MLA Review, there would not have been the same level of criticism of municipal involvement in the system. And if, at the same time, Edmonton had toned down its policy criticisms of the province, it is at least conceivable that Minister Bogle might have decided to leave well enough alone and maintain the provincial-municipal partnerships in preschool day care.
The province took over complete administrative control of the day care system on 1 August 1980. Barely one month later, Bob Bogle announced a breathtaking improvement in the minimum required staff-to-child ratios in day care. The improved ratios meant that day cares would have to hire many more workers to care for the same number of children. Whereas the 1978 Day Care Regulation had stipulated a ratio of one staff person for every six babies (eighteen months of age and younger), the new regulation required a ratio of one to three. For toddlers (nineteen to thirty-five months), a doubling of staff was also mandated: a new ratio of one to five supplanted the old ratio of one to ten. And for children aged three and four years, a 50 percent increase in staff was necessitated by the introduction of a one to eight ratio, replacing the old ratio of one to twelve.

All things being equal, the new staff-to-child ratios would have resulted in a sharp increase in the cost of day care to pay for the extra staff. To limit such increases and to speed the adoption of the new ratios, the province introduced a new universal funding program. Known as “operating allowances,” it involved financially subsidizing every child in a licensed day care. Day cares that operated with the new ratios would immediately qualify for an operating allowance of $50 per child per month, even though the new minimum standards would not become mandatory until 1 August 1982. By meeting a new indoor space requirement of three square metres per child (up from 2.5 square metres), a centre could qualify for an additional allowance of $5 per child per month.32

Advocates for quality child care praised the minister’s announcement. Alderman Barbara Scott of Calgary opined, “They’re the first forward steps in day care in years.” The president of the AAYC, Michael Phair, endorsed the improvements in ratios and group size, and commented, “We are pleased and convinced that these significant changes will help Alberta’s children receive the kind of care that they deserve.” Support for the new standards and operating allowances also came from Jacqui Kallal, president of the PDCS. The minister knew that some commercial operators might object to the initiatives on philosophical grounds, so he made a point of holding a meeting with day care operators in Calgary within hours of announcing the program. He explained that the operating and space allowances were necessary so that “full fee-paying parents wouldn’t be driven away from day care.” As will be discussed in the next chapter, not all commercial operators were convinced by Bogle’s argument. Nevertheless, the influential capitalist operators supported the initiative since they recognized
that a dramatic improvement in staff-to-child ratios at no additional cost to the consumer would make it easier to market their service. The government’s initiative had created new investment opportunities in day care.33

A number of factors contributed to the timing of Minister Bogle’s announcement, its exact content, and the subsequent increases in the value of operating allowances between 1980 and 1982 (see table A.6). But a single group deserves credit for putting the notion of operating allowances on the policy agenda: the MLA Review Committee of 1979–80.

At the same time as it called for ending the provincial-municipal partnerships in the day care system, the MLA Review Committee recommended improving the nutritional and staff-to-child requirements in the Day Care Regulation. Furthermore, the committee recommended “a grant on a per child/space to pay for increased child/staff ratio, nutrition, etc.” The committee termed this “an overhead cost.” This was a novel idea for provincial civil servants since a handwritten addition to a memo explained the proposal as “above subsidy to family.”34

Minister Bogle and Charles Anderson immediately requested that the director of the day care unit estimate the cost of improved staff-to-child ratios at five different centres so that they could get an idea of the required size of the operating allowance. Three of the centres were from the not-for-profit sector, and the other two were owned by leaders of the PDCS: Marlborough Day Care Centre in Calgary, owned by Kurt Darmohray and his wife Gertrude, and Northeast Day Care Centre in Edmonton, owned by Jacqui Kallal. At that time (February 1980), the MLA Review Committee proposed two possible schedules of staff-to-child ratios. The first mirrored the ratios in the 1978 regulation except for slight improvements in the ratios for babies and mixed age groups above two years in age. The second improved the ratios in all age groups but fell decidedly short of the improvements that were eventually introduced in September.

While Minister Bogle almost mechanically implemented the proposals of the MLA Review Committee when it came to ending municipal involvement in the day care system, this was not the case for the new staff-to-child ratios and operating allowances. In this section, I will identify the factors that pushed the government toward requiring such high minimum staffing levels in day care, supported by an innovative universal financing program.

Legislated minimum standards for day care was an important public issue in Alberta in 1980. In 1978 the Day Care Unit had studied how Alberta’s new and improved Day Care Regulation compared to the regulations in other provinces. It concluded that on a number of measures, including staff-to-child ratios, staff
qualifications and training, space per child (indoor and outdoor), and washroom facilities, “Alberta regulations and requirements are clearly below the requirements of most other provinces.” In regard to staff-to-child ratios in Alberta, the report stated, “The requirement of one staff person to six children 0-18 mos. of age is clearly the lowest in Canada as is the 1:10 ratio for children 2-3 yrs. of age.” This report was not released to the public, although advocates for quality day care were well aware that many of the standards in Alberta’s 1978 Day Care Regulation did not measure up in comparison to other provinces or to the recommendations of child care professionals.

There was greater public scrutiny of Alberta’s day care standards in 1979 after the Edmonton Journal surveyed day care facilities across Canada and “found that Alberta ranks at the bottom end of the scale in the care provided.” The survey concluded “that Alberta ranks last in one crucial area, the ratio of staff to children, which determines the amount of personal attention a child receives.” A report on the survey was featured in the Calgary Herald. It included the views of the secretary of the Joint Committee for Quality Child Care, Connie Conway, who stated, “The regulations are terrible.” At around the same time, the province’s Day Care Unit updated the interprovincial comparisons it had completed the previous year. Consequently, provincial civil servants and politicians were well aware that day care standards, particularly staff-to-child ratios, would have to be improved or else Alberta would continue to be portrayed as a laggard on the national stage. It is hardly surprising that the MLA Review Committee in February 1980 recommended improving the ratios.

Nevertheless, Minister Bogle did not proceed with immediate ratio improvements. When he announced on 29 April 1980, that the province would fully fund and administer day care, he indicated that the MLA Review Committee would continue to “consider” the issues of ratios and staff qualifications into 1981. Alberta NDP leader Grant Notley immediately criticized the government for failing to improve staff-to-child ratios. He called on Alberta to meet the ratios in effect in Ontario and Saskatchewan, and a reporter noted that “average staff-child ratios are one to five in Ontario and one to 11 in Alberta.” Comparing Alberta unfavourably to other provinces had become a favourite tactic of those advocating higher day care standards. A leaflet distributed by activists compared Alberta to other provinces on four criteria: staff-to-child ratios, maximum centre size, nutritional requirements for lunch, and indoor space. It concluded: “WHY DOES ALBERTA HAVE THE WORST STANDARDS IN CANADA?” This is the type of argument that was impossible for the government to refute and that just would not go away.
Until the summer of 1980, commercial operators had generally argued against making any improvements to the staff-to-child ratios specified in the 1978 Regulation. Calgary’s pre-eminent day care entrepreneur, Dennis Sorensen, warned against “overstaffing” in day care and argued that critics needed to “respect the phase-in period [to 1983] for both standards and staff qualifications.” The president of the PDCS, Jacqui Kallal, defended Minister Bogle’s decision to delay improvements in standards. “She said higher standards will result in higher fees” and also argued that criticism of the care in commercial centres “insults parents who are the best judges of standards for their children.”

However, two events in the spring of 1980 increased the pressure on the government to make immediate improvements in staff-to-child ratios. The first involved one of the centres in the Panda chain in Calgary. This centre had continued to operate according to the day care standards that were in effect prior to 1978, which meant that the required staff-to-child ratio for children aged two years and above was one to twenty. (Day cares that were in existence prior to the 1978 regulation had the legal right to operate according to the old standards until 1983, although they were not eligible to receive subsidized children.) Dissatisfied with the quality of care, about twenty-five parents pulled their children out of the centre at the end of April and formed an informal committee to lobby for better day care. Such coordinated parental action in itself is noteworthy, but the incident took a strange twist when the group was joined by one parent whose child remained enrolled in the Panda centre. When she learned of this father’s involvement in the group, the centre’s manager, May Grieg, expelled his daughter. The manager also incorrectly declared the parents’ group to be illegal and threatened lawsuits against parents who had made critical remarks about the quality of care in the centre, accusing them of trying to “discredit private day care.”

The press coverage of this event highlighted how controversial it was to have any day cares operating on the pre-1978 standards. The former day care licensing supervisor for the City of Calgary reported that the Panda centre in question did not always meet the one-to-twenty ratio. He stated, “There have been occasions when the staff-child ratio has crept up on one to 25 and the operator has been cautioned.” Even casual observers would have been shocked at these ratios: this type of minimal custodial care might have been acceptable in the early 1900s, but it certainly fell outside of community expectations three-quarters of a century later.

The press coverage also eroded the credibility of the owners of Panda and their supporters in the PDCS. Commenting on the expulsion of the child, the president of the Day Care Association of Calgary (DCAC), Caroline Kiehlbauch,
said, “We would never take this approach.” About half of the commercial centres in Calgary, but not the Panda chain, belonged to the DCAC. In contrast, the president of the PDCS, Jacqui Kallal, stated that the Panda centre was justified in its decision because the parents’ group was “trying to discredit private day care.” In this incident, prominent commercial operators reacted very defensively to criticism, and did not seem capable of putting children’s interests ahead of their business interests.

Second, if the Progressive Conservatives (PCs) had not yet realized that inaction on day care was a political liability, they would have come to this understanding when Social Credit issued a major policy statement on day care in late May 1980. The statement called for up to $5 million per year in new spending in order to improve day care standards; this meant that both opposition parties with seats in the legislature (the NDP and Social Credit) were now criticizing the Lougheed government from a leftist perspective. The Social Credit leader, Bob Clark, argued that since Alberta had a budget surplus of more than $1 billion, it could easily afford $5 million more per year for developing a comprehensive day care program. Clark’s specific proposals included hiring more civil servants for day care consultation, setting a maximum size for a day care at sixty-five children, and improving staff-to-child ratios to a level slightly better than the best of the MLA Review Committee proposals.

The first indication that the government might act quickly to improve day care standards came in early July 1980. Two Tory MLAs from Calgary stated that they and other caucus members favoured immediate improvements in staff-to-child ratios. Dennis Anderson, MLA for Calgary-Currie, reported that he’d received “a fair number of calls” on the subject. The callers were concerned “with standards and the level of care in Alberta in comparison to that in other provinces.” The MLA for Calgary-Forest Lawn, John Zaozirny, stated that he’d received sixty to seventy letters and phone calls on day care over the preceding two months. “It’s been a concerted but sincere lobby effort by daycare operators and parents,” he said. The next day Minister Bogle demonstrated that this was more than wishful thinking on the part of the MLAs: he indicated that some day care standards “may be dealt with in the near future.” However, he left the impression that a day care advisory committee would first be appointed and that he would act after he had received its recommendation on appropriate staff-to-child ratios.

At about this time, Minister Bogle would have learned the results of a new study conducted by Price Waterhouse Associates for his department. It addressed
exactly the same question that internal department studies had addressed in 1978 and 1979: how did day care in Alberta measure up to day care in other provinces? Price Waterhouse concluded, to no one’s surprise, that Alberta’s staff-to-child ratios were at “the low end of the range.” The fact that this study was even commissioned shows the provincial government’s sensitivity to criticism.42

The staff-to-child ratios announced by the minister in early September 1980 and included in the 1981 Day Care Regulation far exceeded the ratios initially considered in February 1980; they moved Alberta from worst to first in the national rankings. The new standards on group size and indoor space also moved Alberta to the top of the national rankings. As a consequence of these three improvements in standards, Calgary Social Services (CSS) reported a significant improvement in the overall ranking of day care standards in Alberta relative to other provinces. Whereas prior to the reforms Alberta had been ranked dead last in the country, CSS now ranked Alberta as being tied for the fourth-best day care standards in Canada, and not very far behind the second- and third-ranked provinces.43

The influence of provincial civil servants can be seen both in the high level of standards introduced by Minister Bogle and in a number of his concurrent announcements. First, the government established the Alberta Day Care Advisory Committee (ADCAC), something bureaucrats had been promoting since the spring of 1979. Second, the government committed itself to financially supporting the development of a satellite FDH program, especially for the care of babies and toddlers. Satellite FDHs had been one of the innovative features of municipal day care programs, something provincial bureaucrats well understood. Until this time, however, Bogle’s reforms in day care had ignored this option for care. Third, the government returned OOSC to the PSS program, where it would be planned and administered by municipalities and cost-shared by the province and municipalities on a 80 percent/20 percent basis, respectively. This corrected another mistake that the minister had made when he acted so quickly in ending municipal involvement in the day care system. Finally, the government promised to expand its day care consultation services. This had been recommended by the Day Care Unit in February 1980 but opposed at the same time by Charles Anderson of the MLA Review Committee, who “cautioned that the staff of the Day Care Unit should not increase.” A few months later, the bureaucratic position had won out over that of the Review Committee.44

One other development confirms that, in the later part of 1980, provincial civil servants were successful in influencing the direction of governmental policy. The MLA Review Committee had explicitly recommended that the government
not set a size limit on day care centres. This would have been a very popular position with day care developers in Calgary, since they had recently built and were planning to build centres that served as many as 156 children. No announcement on this issue was made by Bob Bogle on 4 September, but the government soon decided to limit the size of centres to eighty, as indicated by an instruction sent to licensing inspectors on 17 September 1980.45

My argument is that the provincial government rushed into offering operating allowances as a result of mounting political pressure in the spring and early summer of 1980. An unusual aspect of this policy initiative is that it was announced well before cabinet had agreed to fund it. On 27 November 1980, Bogle submitted a formal request to cabinet for funds to cover the payment of operating allowances (retroactive to 1 September) as well as administrative fees for FDH agencies and expenses associated with the planned regionalization of service delivery. Cabinet approved the request on 16 December 1980. Given that Bob Bogle was a junior minister, he would not have fast-tracked the introduction of operating allowances in this way without first receiving high-level approval.46

Another indication that this was a rushed policy initiative is the flat $55 offered for every licensed space in a day care. The flat fee ran counter to the reason that operating allowances were introduced in the first place—to cover the increased staffing costs associated with improved staff-to-child ratios. Since the new regulation called for a doubling of the staff looking after babies and toddlers, but only a 50 percent increase in the staff looking after three to four year olds, it made sense that the operating allowances for the former two groups should have been much higher than for the latter group. This problem would be corrected in 1981.

In the end, operating allowances were introduced to quell the mounting concerns about day care standards among advocates, parents, and the press while simultaneously enhancing the profitability of commercial day care. At this point, the investment of a few more millions of dollars in day care did not appear to faze the Alberta cabinet in the least. The funding, approved on 16 December 1980, meant that the operating budget for day care would increase from about $7 million in 1980–81 to an estimated $16.5 million in 1981–82. Furthermore, there is no indication of the government discussing the fact that the allowances given to commercial centres for day care would be entirely ineligible for cost-sharing under the terms of the Canada Assistance Plan, while allowances given to not-for-profit centres would likely be ruled eligible for federal funding. As will be discussed in chapter 7, this would soon become an important issue. However, in 1980 the provincial government was literally awash in oil royalties so could afford to spend
a considerable amount of money on the problem of day care standards. For the fiscal year 1979–80, Alberta had a surplus of over $1 billion for the third consecutive year, and non-renewable resource revenue alone almost matched government expenditures of $4.7 billion. The provincial budget tabled in April 1980 projected a surplus of $1.7 billion in 1980–81, with an additional $1.7 billion to be added to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Expenditures were budgeted at $5.4 billion. Furthermore, the government began the year with an accumulated cash surplus of about $2.8 billion. This was a unique moment in Alberta’s history, a time when it was fiscally possible to introduce any number of innovative programs for the care and education of young children and for the support of families with young children. The policy direction chosen by Minister Bogle and his backbench colleagues belied a strong commitment to a free market conservative blueprint for day care.

The provincial cabinet approved substantial increases in operating allowances on 14 April 1981. The size of the increases had been recommended by the ADCAC established in the fall of 1980. An across-the-board increase in operating allowances was to compensate for the high rate of inflation in 1980–81. In addition, there were substantial increases in the operating allowances for infants and toddlers “to reflect ... actual cost to operators in salaries for additional staff required to meet higher improvement levels.” The allowances for infants and toddlers were raised to $180 and $110, respectively, while the allowance for three to four year olds was only raised to $70.

At the same time as the government increased its financial support for very young children in day cares, it did not add any money to the FDH program. Therefore, the care of a baby in an FDH was supported only by a $40 monthly administrative fee paid to the day home agency while care of the same baby in a day care was supported by the $180 monthly allowance. The Tory caucus expressed some reservations about the size of the new operating allowance for infants since “it may make it more difficult to implement Caucus’ intent to focus family day homes services on infants up to 18 months of age.” The new funding arrangement was also criticized by a commercial operator and leader of the DCAC, Caroline Kiehlbauch, who “said it makes more sense to have women care for babies in their homes than to have them in centres where staff levels must be one for every three infants.” Furthermore, the director of Little People’s Day Care in Calgary, Kitty Fenske, noted that most non-profit centres used FDHS to care for infants rather than group care centres. Fenske, who was also a leader of the Calgary Joint Committee for Quality Day Care, expressed disappointment that no new funding was committed to day homes.
Despite these criticisms, the operating allowance for infants increased by another $60 in 1982 (to $240 per month; see table A.6). Throughout his term as minister of SSCH, Bob Bogle remained committed to ensuring that day cares could continue to profitably care for infants while meeting the one staff to three children ratio. This is evidence of the continuing influence of large commercial operators on government day care policy. It also reflects an imbalance in the composition of the ADCAC, which did not include a single representative from the FDH sector.50

STRUGGLES OVER STAFF TRAINING PROGRAMS AND QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

The 1978 Day Care Regulation had promised the establishment of a registry of qualified staff as a basis for requiring 50 percent of the child care workers of a day care to be registered by 1 April 1983. By the middle of 1980, no progress had been made toward this goal, but when Minister Bogle announced the establishment of the ADCAC on 4 September 1980, it looked like the government would finally get around to fulfilling the promise. The members of the ADCAC “were charged with being ‘the eyes and ears of the Minister’ to inform him of the reception of the new regulations and funding and to explore the question of establishing a Registry of trained Day Care workers.” Indeed, a press release indicated that the minister expected the committee to help design an “on-the-job training program” that would complement the existing post-secondary education programs in ECE. The PDCS would later argue that this promised training program was exactly what they had proposed earlier that year.51

In May 1980, the PDCS had publicly criticized ECE programs at colleges like Mount Royal in Calgary and Grant MacEwan in Edmonton, and had expressed a desire to establish its own self-regulated staff education program. PDCS president Jacqui Kallal admitted that commercial operators did not want to fill 50 percent of their staff positions with college graduates and hoped that completion of the PDCS education program would qualify a worker for inclusion on the proposed staff registry. This was a creative attempt by the PDCS both to deskill the notion of a qualified day care worker and to directly control the credentialing process.

Kallal made very disparaging comments about ECE graduates from community colleges, claiming that they did not know how “to love and cuddle children,”
were unwilling to change diapers, and used their study of psychology in college to “psych out our children.” When hiring for her own day care, Kallal said she looked for workers with nurturing, motherhood instincts who enjoyed children. She claimed that within three to six months, such women were usually much more accomplished employees than college graduates. Reading between the lines, however, the PDCS seemed to have two interrelated concerns. First, if only college graduates were eligible for the staff registry, wages would likely be driven up because of a shortage of registered workers. Second, if a commercial operator was forced to employ college graduates in half of the staff positions, that group of employees might well challenge work patterns that shortchanged children in favour of increasing profit.

Both ECE educators and students at Mount Royal College contested Kallal’s arguments. Some students were aware of instances where college-educated staff refused to follow the instructions of commercial operators because they were expected to perform kitchen or janitorial duties in addition to caring for children and this went against their professional responsibilities to the children. One student also challenged Kallal’s assertion that loving children is an adequate foundation for becoming a qualified day care worker. “Loving children isn’t enough,” stated Cathy Lane. “It’s important to understand the best ways of caring for children.”

From 1980 to 1982, responses to the PDCS proposal were mainly negative. It was opposed by civil servants in the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower; by Minister Jim Horsman, who followed his bureaucrats’ advice; by advocates for quality child care; and by those associated with the post-secondary programs in ECE. But the PDCS proposal did have a key supporter: SSCH Minister Bob Bogle. Indeed, Bogle’s consistent efforts to promote the establishment of a PDCS training program, despite opposition from most quarters, are the best evidence we have of the depth of his commitment to the commercial day care sector. With the help of three separate grants approved by Minister Bogle, the PDCS eventually established the Early Childhood Academy (ECA) of Calgary. It began operating in 1983 and held a graduation ceremony for its first class of twenty-six students in early 1984. Such was Bogle’s support for the academy that the PDCS could have easily justified naming it in his honour.

Bob Bogle had the PDCS’s staff training proposal in mind when he named the members of the advisory committee. Five appointments were made to the ADCAC in September 1980, and none of these individuals was employed as an ECE professional (such as a college instructor or day care consultant). In a letter
to the minister, the president of the AAYC termed this “a serious oversight,” but the minister chose to ignore this criticism when he made two additional appointments in early 1981. The ADCAC in 1981–82 comprised two commercial operators, one of whom was a past president of the PDCS; two parents with children in commercial centres; two parents with children in non-profit centres; and the chair, Dr. Audrey Griffiths, a family practitioner who had served as Alberta’s representative on the Federal Commission for the International Year of the Child. Minister Bogle was astute enough to realize that ECE professionals would have been very critical of the PDCS plan for staff training, and keeping them off of the advisory committee would at least make it possible for the committee to accept the PDCS plan. The AAYC again complained in May 1981 about the absence of an ECE professional on the committee, and the organization also called for the appointment of a day care worker and a representative from northern Alberta.

While the composition of the ADCAC was fairly one-sided, tilted in favour of commercial interests, the chair, Dr. Griffiths, was every bit as much an advocate for children’s rights and quality day care as an ECE professional. She took her appointment very seriously and was highly regarded throughout the province, and it was primarily through her efforts that the ADCAC accomplished a great deal of work and developed a stance that was quite independent of the government. Also promoting an advocacy role for the committee until she resigned in the fall of 1982 was Ann Moritz, one of the parents with a child in a non-profit centre. She was an education student who had previous training in early childhood development.

It was at this time that the PDCS established itself as the dominant lobby group for commercial operators in the province, with the DCAC and the Edmonton Independent Day Care Operators Association fading from public view. In the early 1980s, the PDCS’s members owned more than one hundred centres across Alberta. Most importantly, its members included the entrepreneurs who were building day care chains in Calgary. Because of the major investments they were making in day care, and because of the substantial profits that were at stake, these day care capitalists actively supported and generously funded PDCS initiatives.

The PDCS formed an education committee and submitted its first staff training proposal to Minister Bogle in the fall of 1980. At about this time, the organization received a feasibility grant from the Department of SSCH, although the grant does not seem to have been publicized. Even though the PDCS proceeded with its attempt to redefine the notion of staff training in day care, it did not
give up on the possibility that it could get the government to abandon the plan for mandatory staff qualifications. In 1981 Mel Finlay had the job of coordinating the licensing, consultation, and subsidy units of day care. On 26 January 1981, he reported that “the first 200 letters received by the Day Care Advisory Committee were against changes to the regulations and against the requirement for trained staff in day care centres.” The following month, Minister Bogle spoke at a meeting of day care operators and parents in Lethbridge, where a number of parents complained to him that the staff-to-child ratios introduced the previous year were unnecessary and should not have been introduced. Noting the “raging debate” over standards that had occurred in previous years, Bogle asked these parents, “Where were you?”

In March 1981, Bob Bogle approved a $25,000 pilot grant to the PDCS so that it could further develop its proposal for an apprenticeship training program. When the ADCAC asked Bogle about it at their meeting on 12 June 1981, he indicated that this was a one-time grant meant to develop one of the possible options for training day care staff. He also reported that the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower had indicated it could not gear up for this type of apprenticeship program. Since there was “a need to do something during the next year for day care,” he suggested that the PDCS apprenticeship program may not go through advanced education. This grant allowed the PDCS to complete, in October 1981, a proposal for the Day Care Assistant Certificate Program.

In the meantime, ADCAC had received a number of submissions on mandatory staff qualifications from groups such as Alberta community colleges, the AAYC, and CSS. The advisory committee submitted a staff registry plan to Bogle in the fall of 1981. The minister was very active in getting the committee to revise its plan to include the proposed PDCS certificate program and address other matters. At a meeting on 8 December 1981, Dr. Griffiths advised her ADCAC colleagues “that what she felt was needed was a statement which would be acceptable to the Minister but in the same spirit as the committee’s original recommendations, and which would include the assistantship grade of training of the PDCS.”

The ADCAC’s new plan for a staff registry included four categories of workers: (1) those with a two-year college diploma in ECE and “directors grandfathered into the Registry on the recommendation of an Evaluation Committee,” (2) those with a one-year college certificate in ECE, (3) those who had completed a certified day care assistant program, and (4) those who were enrolled in one of the aforementioned courses. The ADCAC recommended a gradual phasing in
of requirements for qualified staff, such that by 1 January 1988 “every day care centre shall have 50% of its workers in category 1 and all other workers in category 2, 3 and 4, but no more than 25% shall be in category 4.” This proposal accommodated the PDCS by giving its training program equivalent standing to a one-year college certificate in ECE. However, it was unacceptable to commercial operators since it would require them to hire many college graduates with ECE diplomas over the coming years. For example, with the staff-to-child ratios announced in 1980, a centre that looked after sixty-one children (six babies, fifteen toddlers, and forty preschoolers) needed to have a minimum of ten primary staff on duty just to look after the children. Under the advisory committee’s proposal, by 1988 at least five of those ten staff would need to have a two-year college diploma in ECE.61

At the end of 1981, it looked like the government was prepared to establish the staff registry and enact mandatory staff qualifications. Minister Bogle apparently discussed this matter with the cabinet on 16 December, although there is no documented record of that discussion. In preparation for that cabinet meeting, the minister scheduled a working meeting with the ADCAC on the evening of 15 December in his office.62

At exactly the same time, the education committee of the PDCS was engaging in discussions with both Mount Royal College and the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower over its proposal for a day care assistant certificate program. The committee was composed of four individuals, all of whom held post-secondary educational credentials of some sort. Three of the committee members were commercial day care operators while the fourth member, Colleen White, was the director of another commercial centre.63

The PDCS had criticized the ECE programs at community colleges in 1980 and continued these criticisms into 1981. In the fall of 1981, the chair of the Department of Social Sciences at Mount Royal College initiated a meeting with Colleen White to investigate these criticisms. He reported “that the Private Day Care Society of Alberta had no criticism to make of our programs, but were simply attempting to get more money from the government to fund training programs for daycare workers.” After meeting with the director of college programs for the Alberta government, Neil Clarke, the college decided to have further discussions with the PDCS. The dean of Community and Health Studies at Mount Royal met with Colleen White and two other members of the PDCS education committee on 22 December 1981. The dean learned that the members of the education committee were not even aware that Mount Royal’s certificate program in ECE was
offered in the evenings for individuals currently employed in day cares. In reference to the proposed certificate program for day care assistants, the committee emphasized that it would “not be overly academic” and that it would be designed to engage the interest of an individual who “often lacks the necessary motivation to pursue an educational program.” Furthermore, they indicated that the PDCS wanted to maintain control over “their program” since they felt that “employers provide valuable input to any academic program.” These observations made it clear that the PDCS wanted an educational program that would help it maintain a large pool of low-wage labour and would be generally sympathetic to the commercial operator’s perspective.64

In the fall of 1981, the PDCS submitted three separate drafts of its education proposal to the College Programs Division of the Advanced Education and Manpower Department. Civil servants had reservations about the “prescriptive” curriculum in the proposal that “appears to respond to the needs of owner-operators of day care centres rather than children placed in these centres.”65 After the PDCS submitted a budget for the proposed program in February 1982, Deputy Minister Henry Kolesar informed Minister Jim Horsman that “the Society’s budget is more than 50 percent overhead, and represents a per student cost of approximately $1,300. A similar program at Grant MacEwan Community College or Mount Royal College would cost between $900 and $1,000.” He added that “the type of training apparently being proposed by the Society does not live up to the standards of the program in the Public Colleges. Hence, it is difficult for us to advocate approval of the Society’s proposal.”66

Advanced Education took the approach of putting off making a final decision, presumably hoping that the matter would be otherwise resolved. In June an internal memo noted, “We are checking on a rumour afield in Calgary that the Kallal proposal has been funded (probably by Mr. Bogle’s office).” Formal approval for funding from SSCH was given by Minister Bogle on 28 July 1982, and Advanced Education never had to communicate a final decision on the PDCS proposal.67

This sequence of events convincingly demonstrates Bob Bogle’s affinity for commercial day care operators and in particular the PDCS. His strong support for the day care assistant certificate program stands in sharp contrast to the minister of Advanced Education and Manpower, who was inclined to follow the advice of civil servants in his department on the matter.

No sooner did Bob Bogle approve funding for the ECA than he abandoned the idea of required staff qualifications in day care. On 13 September 1982, the
ADCAC “was informed by Hon. Bob Bogle ... that cost of implementing regulations and the registry would be too high due to apparent lack of trained staff in many centres (especially private), low rate of hiring from college programs, possibly due to low wages compared with other occupations, high turnover of staff in centres, and apparent low cost benefit from requesting Advanced Education and Manpower to expand diploma programs.” Bogle arrived at this conclusion based upon the results of an internal government study of day care workers in Alberta. The study showed that 68 percent of commercial centres did not have even a single staff member with an ECE diploma and that only 13 percent of all day care workers had this credential. Of the workers with an ECE diploma, slightly more than half were concentrated in a mere 10 percent of the province’s centres. Furthermore, the turnover of workers with ECE diplomas was estimated to be “at least 40 percent per year.”

Minister Bogle’s decision coincided with an economic recession. The unemployment rate in Alberta in September 1982 was 9.4 percent, up sharply from 3.4 percent in September 1981, and there was a marked change in the finances of the provincial government: a budget surplus of $41 million in 1981–82 turned into a budget deficit of $2.1 billion in 1982–83 (these figures do not include royalty revenues transferred to the Alberta Heritage and Savings Trust fund). The recession had a significant impact on the demand for day care. The not-for-profit Dover Day Care in Calgary reported a vacancy rate of 30 percent in September 1982 even though it had been filled to capacity in the Septembers of the previous few years. The overall vacancy rate in Calgary was estimated at 20 percent, and more than half of the 121 centres in the city were now running OOSC programs. Such programs were far less profitable than day care, partly because they involved only a portion of the day and partly because the government did not provide operating allowances for the care of six- to twelve-year-old children. Nevertheless, many day care centres were in financial difficulty due to the high vacancy rate and turned to OOSC programs to weather the economic recession.

With demand for day care falling, and with the government no longer rolling in cash from petroleum royalties, the opportunity for further advances in day care standards had suddenly closed. It would not be until the beginning of the 1990s that the provincial government would introduce a staff qualifications regulation in day care (albeit not as strong a regulation as the ADCAC had recommended in 1981). And it would not be until 2002 that the high annual turnover rate of qualified workers was finally addressed when the government introduced wage enhancements for qualified staff. In walking away from the
staff qualifications issue in 1982, Minister Bogle followed an economic logic that defined the Lougheed Tories; as a result, a unique historical opportunity to improve the quality of licensed day care was lost.

DAY CARE ADVOCATES ON THE PERIPHERY OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT

An important consequence of the end of municipal participation in Alberta’s system of preschool day care in 1980 and of Bob Bogle’s relentless promotion of the interests of commercial operators from 1979 to 1982 was the marginalization of advocates for quality child care. Groups like the AAYC and the social services departments of urban municipalities desperately sought to influence the direction of day care policy in Alberta in the early 1980s. As they had all along, they rejected the role of “outsider” and attempted to work as “insiders” with the provincial government.

As described in chapter 4, groups advocating for quality day care in Alberta went from being core insiders in the early 1970s to specialist insiders in the mid- to late 1970s. During Bob Bogle’s tenure as the minister of SSCH, these groups became peripheral insiders—groups with “the insider form ... but little, if any, influence” (Maloney, Jordan, and McLaughlin 1994, 27, 31). Although the minister and his department continued to formally treat groups like the AAYC as insiders, they became increasingly marginal to important policy discussions and decisions. Indeed, the provincial government and bureaucracy came to see important advocacy groups as opponents, and those groups acted in kind. Earlier in this chapter, I outlined the adversarial relations that developed between the province and the City of Edmonton in 1979–80. By 1982 relations between the AAYC and the provincial government had a similar oppositional character. Given Minister Bogle’s ideological sympathies for the commercial sector, it is difficult to see how things could have been otherwise.

The plan for mandatory staff qualifications was withdrawn just prior to the campaign for the 1982 provincial election, held 2 November. It had the potential to be an election issue, especially after a member of the ADCAC, Ann Moritz, resigned in mid-October to protest government inaction on the staff registry. Civil servants in SSCH panicked about the potential for political fallout after attending the annual conference of the AAYC, held on 16 October. One of the sessions at the conference was titled “Who Makes Day Care Policy in Alberta?” Speaker Sheila Campbell identified the “determinants of policy in hierarchical
order.” A provincial civil servant attended and made notes on her presentation. I reproduce these notes verbatim both to set the stage for the government reaction to the remarks and to record Campbell’s considerable insights into the politics of day care in Alberta at that time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORDER OF INFLUENCE</th>
<th>FACTORS OF INFLUENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political philosophy of significant members of Cabinet</td>
<td>“laissez-faire—a no accountability policy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“a caveat emptor policy—let the parent beware”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet and Legal Branch</td>
<td>“quality sacrificed to cost factors”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“concerns about legal hassles impede the closing of poor centres”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister</td>
<td>“heavily influenced by private operators and media and masked from reality”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Day Care lost in huge department”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucus</td>
<td>“if no input from constituency they are influenced by their own biases”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucrats</td>
<td>“implementation of policy varies, best intention but subjective. No status.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“appears MLAs distancing themselves from bureaucrats in favour of non-professional advisors”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal governments</td>
<td>“Bureaucratic commitment to quality has impact”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>“Cost/quality decisions have impact”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest groups/individuals/associations/community colleges</td>
<td>“limited impact”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>“impact only if they exercise the power of the dollar”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s needs</td>
<td>“no impact on policy”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the AAYC conference and the receipt of Ann Moritz’s letter of resignation, the director of the Day Care Branch prepared and hand delivered a “sensitive alert” to Minister Bogle, with the notes on Sheila Campbell’s presentation attached. Melane Hotz observed that Moritz’s statements were similar to Campbell’s remarks and speculated that “the two incidents in one week, at this time, may be related, as I have been told that there was some informal questioning from outsiders at the Conference about ‘trouble on the Committee’ and the ‘cancellation’ of the Registry.” She advised Minister Bogle “that there
may be media enquiries on the issues of the Advisory Committee role, the two Committee vacancies, and the Registry, in an effort to obtain some commitment from you prior to the election.” This was a “sensitive alert” because the minister had not made public his decision to abandon the staff registry plan.71

Melane Hotz prepared a further warning on 5 November (just after the election) when she learned that Ann Moritz had released to the Edmonton Journal the internal government study of day care workers and had been interviewed by the paper. A reporter for the Journal was prepared “to do an exposé of day care,” although the reporter had honoured Ann Moritz’s request that all the information she provided not be made public until after the election.72

This episode is perhaps a fitting end to Bogle’s tumultuous years in charge of day care in Alberta. The exposé was published on 13, 15, and 16 November. Despite his apparent desire to remain as minister of SSCH, Bob Bogle became the minister of Utilities and Telecommunications on 19 November, when the new cabinet was sworn in. He left his post under a dark cloud, having been accused by Ann Moritz “of blocking desperately needed daycare improvements, and of being unconcerned about daycare quality.” “I’ve toured daycare centres across Alberta,” stated Moritz, “and most private centres are a complete and utter disgrace. I’m afraid of what happens to kids who come out of those.” To support her argument that the government needed to legislate a requirement for trained staff, Moritz noted, “I felt the few private centres I saw which were anywhere near good had trained workers.”

Ann Moritz also said she had witnessed the physical abuse of children in day cares, including a severe spanking, and complained that government inspectors were “terrified of losing their jobs” if they tried to close a bad centre. Referring to the former director of day care licensing, Pieter de Groot, Moritz noted, “The last time someone tried to do something about a [bad] centre, he was fired.”73

These events demonstrate that in the early 1980s, advocates for quality day care could still find an audience for their concerns through the mass media, and the provincial government was still very sensitive to their criticisms. While they had become peripheral insiders in the provincial policy process, advocates continued to indirectly influence the direction of Alberta’s day care system through their capacity to critique and politically embarrass the provincial government. Consequently, the unique configuration of standards and funding that developed in Alberta at this time was not a pure market model, despite the free enterprise proclivities of Minister Bogle and many of his colleagues in the Tory caucus.
Between 1966 and 1978, the provincial government had partnered with municipalities to establish and maintain a network of high-quality, not-for-profit day cares throughout Alberta. The provincial government then decided to turn its back on this model and struck out in an entirely new direction. This new direction was determined by three main factors. First, key provincial politicians, and in particular the minister of SSH from 1979 to 1982, supported free enterprise ideology and looked to the commercial sector to meet the growing needs for day care. Second, a strong movement for quality day care had developed alongside the not-for-profit PSS day cares. This movement was provincial in scope and included municipal bureaucrats and politicians, ECE professionals, trained day care workers, and the thousands of parents whose children had benefited from high-quality day care. An important source of strength for this movement was that it could point to the day cares developed with PSS support as practical alternatives to what the commercial sector had to offer. Third, the change from one system to another coincided with an economic boom in Alberta that saw the provincial government awash with royalties due to high oil prices.

The unusual configuration of Alberta’s new system is shown in interprovincial comparisons of day care for 1982 and 1983. The commercial sector was stronger in Alberta than in any other province, controlling 70 percent of all pre-school spaces. At the same time, the Government of Alberta spent more on day care per capita than any other government ($98.36 per person per year). Alberta also led the other provinces in supply of licensed spaces, with 8.1 spaces for every one hundred preschool-aged children, well ahead of second-place Manitoba (6.8 spaces) and third-place Ontario (6.0 spaces). Alberta’s record on day care standards was mixed: while its staff-to-child ratios were among the best in the country, it was among the provinces that had no training requirements for day care directors or workers. Finally, the average cost of day care was considerably less than the cost in Ontario and approximately the same as in the other large Canadian provinces, despite Alberta’s requirement of relatively high staff-to-child ratios (Price Waterhouse Associates 1982).

Another way to identify the unique features of the Alberta day care system in the early 1980s is to make comparisons with two jurisdictions outside Canada where day care was developing in two very different ways. The first comparator is Texas. As in Alberta, Texas had a strong demand for day care because of the economic boom caused by high oil prices. And as in Alberta, the number of licensed
day cares in Texas increased rapidly at this time, especially in the commercial sector. But the growth of licensed day care in Texas occurred without significant public investment and consequently was driven by market forces. Nevertheless, the Government of Texas did play an important role in the expansion because it left in place very low staff-to-child ratios, allowing the owners of licensed day cares to keep their prices low and compete for market share with unlicensed babysitters.75

For four year olds, Texas required a ratio of either one to eighteen or one to twenty (depending upon the age structure of the group). The latter ratio tied Texas with five other states for the lowest required ratio in the United States and was equal to the ratio that existed in Alberta prior to the 1978 Day Care Regulation. For two year olds, Texas required a ratio of either one to eleven or one to thirteen; the latter ratio was the lowest in the entire United States (Morgan 1992, 15–16).

Low staff-to-child ratios facilitate the expansion of the licensed day care sector since the fees charged to middle-class parents can be kept very low. Therefore, Texas was a magnet for capitalist investment in day care in the 1980s, as were other states with low ratios and strong economies, such as Florida and Georgia.

A state-subsidized sector similar to that in Alberta developed in Texas at the same time, offering care for children from low-income families. However, this sector was proportionally much smaller in Texas than in Alberta because of limited government funding and had a hard time maintaining a high quality of service. In 1984 it represented merely 2 percent of the total number of day care and nursery spaces in Dallas. In comparison, the PSS sector represented 28 percent of all licensed spaces in Alberta in 1975 (calculated from data in table 4.2).

The second comparator is Sweden. A mid-1990s study of services for young children in the European Union noted that “Sweden is known for having a well developed public system of services for young children, highly subsidised and with a high level of availability and affordability. It is internationally recognised as having a high level of quality” (European Commission Network on Childcare 1996, 113). Indeed, public day care and parental leave have become defining characteristics of the Swedish social-democratic welfare state. This was not always the case, however. In 1965 only 3 percent of preschool children in Sweden were cared for in state-supported day cares and FDHs (Broberg and Hwang 1991, 92; Gunnarsson 1993, 500–501).

In response to an ongoing economic boom and a strong demand for female labour in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as strong pressure from the feminist movement, the governing Social Democratic Party, supported by the Liberal and Communist parties, greatly expanded the availability of publicly funded
and administered day care until its defeat in the election of 1976. The centre-right coalition government from 1976 to 1982 included the Liberal Party and also supported the public day care system, although it did extend arrangements for parental leave to make it more likely that women would take leaves than men. By 1980 there was 0.31 of a public space per preschool-aged child; this was almost four times the total availability ratio found in Alberta in 1982 (Broberg and Hwang 1991, 92; Esbensen 1983; Gunnarsson 1993, 495–500; Mahon 1997).

The Social Democratic Party returned to power in 1982, and in 1985 the Swedish parliament resolved that all children had the right to receive municipal day care from the age of eighteen months (the end of the period of parental leave). That year there was 0.45 of a public space per preschool-aged child (Broberg and Hwang 1991, 92; Mahon 1997, 10).

The day care system that developed in Sweden between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s was somewhat like the PSS system of day cares in Alberta in the 1970s. This reflects the social liberal content of the PSS system and supports Mahon’s observation that there is a “fine boundary between social liberalism and social democracy” (2008, 344). One key difference, however, is that Sweden’s system was more or less universal in design while Alberta’s system merely incorporated universalistic elements (such as reserving spaces for children from middle- and upper-income parents) into a welfare-program design. A second key difference is that Sweden’s system was much better funded and hence able to serve a much larger proportion of the population of young children. For an average day care space in 1987, the central government covered 47 percent of the cost using a payroll tax on employers, and municipalities met 43 percent of the cost with tax revenue. The remaining 10 percent was born by parents. Most municipalities charged parents on a sliding fee scale, dependent upon income (Broberg and Hwang 1991, 80).

Nevertheless, a similar commitment to quality characterized both Alberta’s PSS day care system and the public system developed in Sweden. In Sweden, the staff-to-child ratios were low and all staff were required to have a two- or three-year educational course. In the early 1980s, the required staff-to-child ratios ranged from one to three for children less than three years of age to one to six for older groups of children (Esbensen 1983, 10; Hwang and Broberg 1992, 41).

One characteristic shared by all three day care systems in the early 1980s was affordability, at least for middle- and upper-income families. In Sweden, affordability was made possible by large universal state subsidies. In Alberta, affordability resulted from a combination of universal operating allowances and the
absence of training standards for day care workers. In Texas, affordability was a consequence of low staff-to-child ratios along with no training standards. A second similarity of all three systems was the exclusion of low- to middle-income families who made too much to qualify for subsidization based upon income but too little to find the regular fees affordable. For these families, the only option was the unregulated private day home. It is surprising that this problem existed in the heavily subsidized Swedish system (Gunnarsson 1993, 512). The lesson is that any parent fees create problems of accessibility for a segment of clients unless the threshold for paying fees is well above the middle of the income range.

In building its ambitious day care system, Sweden faced many of the problems that bedevilled the old PSS day care system in Alberta, only on a much larger scale. Due to municipal administration, there was geographical variability in the availability and cost of services (Broberg and Hwang 1991, 78–81). Furthermore, demand consistently exceeded supply (Gunnarsson 1993, 509–10). The problem of excess demand had a different character in Sweden, however, since the state promoted demand by declaring quality, not-for-profit day care to be a right. In comparison, the PSS day cares in Alberta were, in the main, an advanced social welfare initiative for lower-income families. Sweden responded to the excess demand by committing itself to expanding supply and in the meantime ignoring the private child care arrangements that families made because a place in the public system was unavailable. Not only did such private services receive no public funding, but they were unregulated (Broberg and Hwang 1991, 82).

In conclusion, the new day care system established in Alberta in the early 1980s was quite distinct from that found in either Texas or Sweden. Public money fuelled the rapid expansion of commercial day care in Alberta, and the government legislated high minimum staff-to-child ratios in order to promote custodial care that guarded the well-being of young children. Given that a significant proportion of provincial spending was on business subsidies to commercial owners, this appears to be a distinctive variety of the liberal welfare regime. Nevertheless, it was clearly liberal in orientation, and Alberta’s new system was therefore more like that found in Texas, just as Alberta’s old system of PSS day cares was more like that found in Sweden. The prototypical day care in Alberta’s new system was the commercial chain centre, the most important advocacy voice was the day care entrepreneur, day care workers were horribly underpaid with many leaving the field every year for other employment, and day care’s potential to promote widespread early learning was unrealized.