

5. Child Care

The provision of child care services was identified as a solution for some of the stress endured by farm families. The results of the 1989 Rural Child Care Survey conducted by the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada indicated that the lack of child care facilities was a major concern, whether women worked off the farm, on the farm or in the home.

Given the hours of work and the seasonal nature of farm work, central child care facilities with inflexible schedules do not meet the needs of parents with children. Innovative schemes, such as central child care registries and portable facilities, were recommended by survey respondents, as was income support for families to enable parents to stay at home with their young children, if they wish. Of the survey respondents, more than 60% indicated that they would prefer to remain at home and care for their own children if they could afford to do so.

FARM STRESS EQUALS PEOPLE STRESS

The Committee sees the concept of human sustainability in agriculture as significant. People are the cornerstone of any sustainable development in agriculture and the health of these people must be preserved. The present levels of stress reported by farm communities is unacceptable. The recognition that stress creates ill-health and contributes to injury, accidental death and illness makes it a serious concern of national significance.

Efforts to reduce farm stress require the attention of many segments of Canadian society. Farmers and their families can take the lead in acknowledging and articulating its effects. Educators, researchers, service providers and legislators can direct public policy to areas of particular concern and to ways the stress can be alleviated. The health of our farms and the health of our farmers are bound together, and both are sustainable.