

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

Working together for a non-profit child care system that is high quality, affordable, accessible, publicly funded and accountable.

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A few facts - A Snapshot:

- 86% of mothers are back in the workforce within a year of having given birth and their children are in some form of non-parental care.
- In 2003 there were 357,900 BC mothers of children from infants to 12 years in the paid labour force. Of these 357,900 children:
 - 70,400 were from birth to 2 years of age
 - 78,000 were from 3-5 years of age and
 - 209,500 were from 6-12 years of age
- Workforce participation of BC mothers by age of youngest child:
 - 0 to 2 years - - 70,100; 67.4 %
 - 3 to 5 years - - 56,000; 73.5%
 - 6 to 15 years - - 175,100; 78.7%
- Economists estimate that if all mothers with children under the age of 6 were to leave the labour force, the cost to the Canadian economy would be about \$83 billion per year.

BC's child care reality?

- The percentage of children for whom there is a regulated child care space in our province of BC is 13.7%.

Our advocacy is substantiated by international and local research that shows that a universal approach to quality child care promotes healthy child development at the same time as it:

- supports families and their workforce participation,
- reduces child poverty,
- advances women's equality,
- deepens social inclusion and
- builds a knowledge-based economy.

Investing in a child care system through the tax system

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC believes that we need to build a quality publicly funded, community-delivered child care system in Canada. We appreciate that it makes sense to pay for things collectively rather than individually. We think it makes sense to invest in a child care system through the tax system because:

- Families are usually at their lowest earning power when their children are young. When they most need child care, they are least likely to be able to afford it.
- Children's development is time sensitive and can't wait until their families can afford quality care.
- The benefits of investing in child care now outweigh the costs and will lead to future increased tax revenues.
- The earlier we invest in our children, the longer we all reap the benefits through economic contributions, a civil society and a healthier citizenry.

We know it isn't always popular to talk about taxes.

We feel many BC'ers and Canadians have been encouraged to lose sight of the connection between the taxes we pay, government surpluses and the vital services we receive.

But, in BC we have learned first hand that corporate and big tax cuts mean service cuts and increased user fees which impact negatively on low and moderate income families.

Making a fundamental shift in the current approach to child care

Based on extensive research and experience, we believe that building a sustainable pan Canadian child care system will take:

- a fundamental shift in the current approach to child care,
- sustainable and sufficient federal and provincial funding, and
- well designed provincial policy to transform the current patchwork of services.

Throughout Canada, effective universal programs and services that are funded through the tax system are available for anyone in the community who needs and/or wants to use them. While research affirms that access to quality child care provides benefits across all social and economic classes, the current child care patchwork is dependent upon user fees and subsidy systems which have income, employment or ability based eligibility criteria that restrict and limit access.

Research demonstrates that subsidy systems do not ensure:

- an adequate supply of quality child care;
- equitable access to existing child care spaces;
- public policy that entitles children equal access to child care.

Our recommendations:

You have informed the public that BC surpluses and increased revenues are available.

We call on the Finance Committee and BC government to:

1. use the provincial surpluses to restore the \$40 million cut from BC's own spending on child care since 2001/02
2. use the federal dollars for early learning and child care to bring DAYCARE FEES DOWN and WAGES UP.
3. develop child care policy and spending that shifts the cost of child care from user fees to public funding.
4. ensure that every aspect of the BC child care plan and every dollar of spending on child care improves and sustains quality licensed child care services.

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC is a voluntary, non-profit organization of parents, child care workers, interested citizens and community organizations.