



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

### **September 1, 2009 — Media Release — BC Budget Update Response**

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC remains discouraged that British Columbia continues to have one of the weakest approaches to child care in the industrialized world (OECD and UNICEF reports).

Today the BC Budget Update highlights a phased in approach to full school day Kindergarten for five year olds starting in September 2010, with an expenditure of \$44 million. This might have been good news if it were not for the cuts to the existing K-12 education system (\$98 million cut from school facilities grants).

The BC Finance Minister says that switching to the HST is the single best thing government can do to improve the economy... **we strongly disagree**. Investing in a system of early care and learning is what the BC government can and should do to support working families and stimulate the BC economy.

The Finance Minister says BC is moving ahead with the HST because Ontario announced it would be doing so — then why is BC not following Ontario's lead with regard to child care? In comparison to the integration of the child care and school systems in Ontario — children and families in BC continue to be denied access to comprehensive early care and learning services.

If the BC government truly valued children and working families as a priority it would demonstrate its commitment by increasing public investment in quality early care and learning services, but sadly the opposite has occurred with recently implemented cuts to child care capital funding.

**We can afford to invest in child care now just as we are investing in the Olympics, with an even longer, more impactful legacy.** As our counterparts in most other jurisdictions have realized, investment in quality child care reaps strong economic returns of at least \$2 for every \$1 invested — so the truth is we can't afford NOT to invest.

The Budget Update today does nothing to alleviate the current child care crisis:

1. There are only enough regulated child care spaces for 14% of children under 12 in BC — leaving too many parents unable to work and achieve their career goals, and too many children in situations where the quality of their early care and learning is unknown. Wait times for licensed child care are years long.
2. After housing, child care is the second highest cost facing BC families. In 2008, an average Metro Vancouver family with a 4-year-old in full-time child care and a 7-year-old in after-school care paid 20% of their monthly expenditures, or \$12,000, for child care — if they could find it.
3. Staff wages are so low that recruiting and retaining professional early childhood educators is a well-documented concern across the province, undermining child care quality.

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