



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

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### **What is behind BC Government's new stand on Big Box child care???**

As the University of Victoria considers contracting out child care services to the national big box chain ***Kids and Company***, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC has learned that private lobbyists are working to advance ***Kids and Company*** interests in Ontario and Ottawa.

"It makes us wonder what is behind Minister Mary Polak's lack of concern about big box child care in BC," says Susan Harney, Chair of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC.

When presented in the Legislature with her predecessor Linda Reid's clear position that BC would **not** be home to large, corporate child care, Minister Polak side stepped her responsibility for child care policy by saying "*(Linda Reid was) responding to the fact that we hadn't had any requests at that time, and it wasn't a direction that she saw the province going. The fact of the matter is that the decision (to contract with Kids and Company) would be one for the University of Victoria. It isn't a decision for government.... It is the private sector's role to create those spaces, and we respond with funding support when they do.*"

"We are really worried that big box child care chains may be lobbying the BC government," says Harney. "And, without a commitment to community owned and controlled child care and a plan to meet the needs at U Vic and across BC, the Minister is putting children and families at the mercy of private investors."

Parents at the University of Victoria who are desperate for child care have every reason to be concerned that the current Minister accepts no responsibility for the child care crisis her government has created or for finding viable solutions.

And, if the University of Victoria's Board of Governors agrees to contract with ***Kids and Company***, they will be ignoring international evidence demonstrating the dangers of relying on commercial big-box daycare chains to deliver high quality, affordable, accessible child care.

As we saw in Australia, where the government put the country's child care future in the hands of a large corporate child care chain, claims that the corporate sector can do it better were not realized. Sooner or later private investors want a return on their investment and this comes at a cost... parent fees go up, staff wages and working conditions go down, and quality suffers while the corporate sector lobbies for deregulation and more public funding.

"We urge the University of Victoria's Board of Government to reject the commercial route and join us in calling on Minister Polak to be part of the solution – not part of the problem," Harney concludes. "We seek her commitment to community owned and controlled child care services".

See [www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabcdocs/pdf/cccabccplan.pdf](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabcdocs/pdf/cccabccplan.pdf) for how the BC government could and should be investing in BC's working and studying families for better outcomes for our children and the added benefit of economic stimulus.