

# Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

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

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## Finally – BC Remembers School Age Child Care! September, 2007

On August 27, 2007, Linda Reid, BC's Minister of State for Child Care announced increases in the subsidy rates for children 6 and over who attend licensed and unlicensed before and after school care.

**It's been 13 years since the subsidy rates for school age care have increased so government action is long overdue.** And, given that Minister Reid's government is unwilling to properly fund a child care system, higher subsidies will help some low income families pay for child care in the short term.

But – let's be clear. A small increase in subsidy rates does not absolve Minister Reid of responsibility for her government's record on school age care and is not a long term fix. Here's why:

- In 2001, when the current provincial government came to power it cancelled the Funding Assistance Program (FAP) for school-age care and gains made were lost. Since then school age child care has been sorely neglected.
- Under FAP, parents paid only \$7 a day for licensed school age care and the province provided operating grants to licensed school age programs to cover their other costs. Low income families still received subsidies to help pay their fees and in some cases, they paid little or nothing at all. Enrolment went up and more spaces opened.
- FAP demonstrated that when quality care is available and affordable, families choose it. FAP was to be the model for building an affordable child care system for younger children in BC. But, after canceling FAP and making other child care cuts, the province completely turned its back on school age care.
- The only new child care spending in BC since 2002 has come from federal transfer payments which could only be spent on children under 6. So, school age care in BC was sweet out of luck. Not surprisingly, school age fees went up, enrolment went down and some services closed.
- Now – after years of neglect, Minister Reid says she is spending on school age care. But, what she doesn't say is that these increases likely come from federal funds too. This year, BC received \$33 million from the federal government. Once it was clear that the Prime Minister's ill fated election promise to build spaces through tax credits to employers wouldn't work, the federal government gave the money to provinces. This time there were no strings attached so finally school age care in BC mattered again.
- 30 years of experience prove that subsidies are not the way to fund a stable quality child care system. While some claim that subsidies protect the most vulnerable, history shows that given the chronic under funding of child care, subsidy increases lead to fee increases. Within a few months, subsidized families are once again paying the difference between their subsidy and the cost of care. Other families pay it all.

While increased subsidies will make a short term difference for some families, the evidence is clear that adequate, accountable operating funding is the only way to build a quality child care system that is affordable for working families.

**The Coalition of Child Care Advocates joins families and providers in calling for real child care solutions and real child care progress.** We look forward to the day when government announces:

- An end to ad hoc, last minute child care spending
- A coherent 5 year child care plan with targets and timelines to build a child care system
- A provincial commitment to provide adequate, stable funding that brings fees down, wages up and creates more spaces.