

CODE BLUE for child care



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Step forward for child care

Supporters of early learning and child care in BC are celebrating the 144-116 vote in Parliament for an Early Learning and Child Care Act.

Bill C303, an NDP private member's bill lays the foundation for a country-wide child care system. It received the unanimous backing of the opposition parties. Conservative MPs and independent Garth Turner were opposed. The Bill now goes to review by a Standing Committee and is expected to return for a third and final vote in early 2007.

"It is significant that the three opposition parties gave child care their unanimous support," says Sharon Gregson, with the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC. "This indicates the Bill could indeed become law before an expected spring election."

The Act does not compel the government to spend money on child care, but it does require any future spending in this area to meet the Act's demand for quality, affordable, accessible early learning and child care services.

"If this Act had been in place the Harper government would not have been able to tear up signed child care agreements with the provinces and replace them with small taxable allowance masquerading as child care. We now have our sights set on electing representatives to the next parliament who recognize the importance of quality child care for children, parents and communities," Gregson added.

A new study by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development shows Canada has the worst record in the developed world with respect to access to early learning services. Canada is also at the bottom of the list when it comes to investment in child care services.

"The Finance minister's statement today confirms a healthy budgetary federal surplus. The OECD report shows Canada is the fourth wealthiest nation on the planet, yet among the most miserly when it comes to supporting families with children. We need to see the funding cuts to child care services reversed in the next federal budget, and we need the money to be directed to the provinces and territories as set out in Bill C303," says Lynell Anderson, a BC based child care financing expert.

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