

child care
advocacy forum

1999 – 2010

CHILD CARE ADVOCACY FORUM: 1999–2010

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1999, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC invited 5 of BC's large child care organizations:

- BC Association of Child Care Employers (*formerly BC Association of Child Care Services*)
- Early Childhood Educators of BC
- School Age Child Care Association of BC
- Western Canada Family Child Care Association of BC (*now BC Family Child Care Association*)
- Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre

to develop a common child care advocacy voice in BC.

The initiative came on the heels of an historic strike in BC's community social services sector – a strike that saw many child care providers take a difficult and groundbreaking stand about their worth and value.

This experience and the promise of significant provincial action on child care highlighted the need for a common child care advocacy voice and the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum was born.

We began with a Common Vision and Agenda for BC Child Care Services. For the next 10 years, this Vision was the lens through which we monitored and influenced public child care policy, raised public awareness about child care and framed child care as a 'smart solution' for children, families and communities.

Our structure was unique. Each member organization kept its own mandate, membership and governing structures. Each organization maintained its right to speak independently on child care issues. In the Forum's final year of activity, the BC Family Child Care Association chose to allocate their limited resources to their own organizational priorities.

We kept things simple – never formally incorporating as a legal entity. Rather, we relied on member organizations and the wonderful support of SFU Child Care Society to manage the legal and financial requirements.

Many of our best times were around the kitchen table – eating, laughing, sometimes cursing and always challenging each other to think outside the box. And, when we DID agree (which was most of the time) we spoke with one voice.

We are proud that every month, representatives from our member organizations made the decision that, no matter how busy, how frustrating or challenging the work – the effort to learn from and with each other was worth it. Perhaps this is our most important legacy of all.

Many thanks to the Vancouver Foundation, other funders and most importantly the caregivers, families and advocates across BC who helped make our messages come alive. We know we challenged the conventions but trust you agree that it was a worthwhile journey.

FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD

What follows is the public record of the work of the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum. The papers, briefs, and submissions to government; the campaigns to ensure the voices of families and communities were heard and the public education materials to raise awareness.

In many ways, the Advocacy Forum's public record is the history of child care policy in BC and Canada over the last decade.

Look back at our first letter writing campaign that resulted in over 10,000 letters to the provincial government and put publicly funded child care on the agenda.

Follow our consistent messages to federal governments about their responsibility to provide provinces with adequate funds and then hold them accountable for using the funds to build child care systems.

See our 2003 report, *Where are the Children*, describing the real impact of child care cuts on children, families and communities. Check out our groundbreaking financial analysis detailing how federal and provincial funds that should have gone into building a child care system missed the mark.

Consider the examples of advocacy workshops and speeches delivered across BC and the regional networking we did early on with BC's Child Care Resource and Referral Programs. Their insight and knowledge informed our work and their ability to share advocacy tools with their communities was invaluable.

Find the facts in our *Setting The Record Straight* Series. And, enjoy our *Child Care: Smart Solutions* campaign that reached new audiences as ads on the walls of stalls in your favourite restaurants, pubs and medical buildings.

When you look at the sum of our work, we hope you will see that through more downs than ups – our message was consistently simple. BC needs a plan, with targets and time lines, to build child care system that

- entitles ALL children access to quality services
- is publicly funded
- provides families with a range of quality choices
- respects and values the work of early childhood educators.

These messages remain as relevant today as they were in 1999. The difference is that now, the vast majority of Canadians agree with us!

We hope this record will inspire and help future generations of advocates. While the Advocacy Forum is winding up – our commitment to advance our Common Vision for Child Care remains alive and well.

A COMMON VISION AND AGENDA FOR CHILD CARE IN BC

This document is endorsed by the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum

BC is well served by several dynamic, provincial membership-based child care organizations, each with its own mandate and priorities. Over the last several years, many of these organizations have come to see that we share some “common ground”. In March 1999, representatives from six organizations met to affirm our commitment to a collective voice for child care. While we recognized the importance of working on our own priorities, we all agreed that without a common vision for child care, few of our long-term goals are achievable. We all share responsibility for advancing our common beliefs.

What is our Child Care Vision?

A comprehensive child care system includes a wide range of quality, affordable and accessible programs and services that facilitate the growth and development of all children.

These include:

- full and part-time programs for children from birth to 12 years;
- centre, family and in-home care;
- family resource and support programs;
- child care resource and referral programs and other information services that support all families and caregivers; and
- programs that support the full inclusion of all children and families.

Quality child care is a cornerstone of a comprehensive early childhood development strategy. It helps build strong communities and supports families in their parenting role; enables parents to participate in work, study and community life; promotes equitable opportunities for women in society; contributes to a healthy economy and is an essential piece of a strategy to reduce poverty, exclusion and isolation.

What is our Child Care Agenda?

We are committed to a child care system that:

1. Entitles all children to access quality child care and early childhood programs, regardless of their families' economic or employment status.
2. Honours and respects the diversity of BC's children, families and communities.
3. Provides families with choices from a range of coordinated, quality, licensed and regulated child care programs.
4. Is publicly funded through the tax system and affordable for all families who need or want to use it.
5. Provides caregivers with training opportunities, wages, benefits and working conditions that are commensurate with their education, experience and responsibilities.
6. Meets and exceeds standards that are associated with quality and positive childhood development.
7. Is complemented by a comprehensive family policy that includes extended parental leave and progressive family/work policies.

What Does the Research say?

Most Canadians support our vision:

Results of a 2002 poll Perceptions of Quality Child Care show that:

- 90% of Canadians want a nationally coordinated child care plan that gives all children access to quality child care.
- 86% of Canadians support a publicly funded child care system that makes quality child care available to all children.
- 88% of Canadians support increased wages for caregivers.

[Millward, Brown, Goldfarb for the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada & Canadian Child Care Federation, 2002]

Quality child care is good for children:

“Studies... have found that high quality day-care increases children’s linguistic, cognitive, and social competencies, and... that participation in high quality day-care arrangements has long-lasting benefits for children from low income families.”

[The Importance of Quality Child Care, Kohen & Hertzman, 1998]

Public investment in child care makes economic sense:

A 1998 cost-benefit analysis of child care in Canada concluded that for every \$1 invested in licensed child care there is a \$2 benefit.

[The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care, Cleveland and Krashinsky, 1998]

“The investment in early childhood produces lower social spending on families, higher tax revenues to government and greater economic security.”

[The New Liberalism: Ideas and Ideals, Sherri Torjman, The Caledon Institute, 2003]

Other countries recognize the value of investing in the early years:

“Improving the quality of, and access to early childhood education and care has become a major policy priority in OECD Member countries... the early years are increasingly viewed as the first step in lifelong learning and a key component of a successful education, social and family policy agenda.”

[Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001]

Canada and BC are falling behind:

A 2001 study of Canadian child care found that other than in Quebec, over the last decade, regulated child care has declined, policy incoherence has grown and Canada has fallen behind other countries.

[Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, Friendly, Beach and Turiano, 2001]

A 2002 survey of 700 BC caregivers shows that because of provincial funding cuts, 57% of child care programs have fewer subsidized children, 49% have decreased enrolment, 31% have increased fees, 19% may close in the near future and 52% are concerned about their future viability.

[Where Are the Children?, BC Child Care Advocacy Forum, 2003]

The case for high quality child care has been well documented and articulated by respected leaders from both inside and outside the child care community.

The needs have been identified.

The challenges and concerns are clear.

The solutions are achievable.

Now it’s time for action!

What Can You Do?

It will take all of us working together to ensure that our children get what they need and deserve. You can:

- Share this vision and agenda in your community.
- Make this vision and agenda a priority in your work.
- Have your organization endorse this vision and agenda.
- Let your local, provincial and federal politicians know that you are counting on them to act.
- Join one or more of the member organizations of the Advocacy Forum.
- Check our website regularly for current advocacy campaigns.
- Speak up and out for children, families and communities.

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES AND WORKSHOPS

The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum delivered a number of presentations and workshops at federal, provincial and regional conferences and gatherings. We also hosted Regional Networking Sessions in a number of communities. These titles and descriptions are examples of some of these presentations.

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

Child Care in BC – An Advocate’s Perspective

Increasingly, early childhood educators understand that their ability to provide the best possible care for children depends on public policies that support quality, inclusive, accessible child care. In her keynote address, Rita Chudnovsky will provide an Advocate’s perspective on the ‘hot’ issues facing child care and early childhood educators in BC today. She will help us see the links between sometimes abstract and distant policy discussions about child care and the daily ‘on the ground’ experiences of children, families and early childhood educators. Based on two decades of advocacy experience, Rita will share some of her conclusions about why Canada is one of the few industrialized countries in the world without a comprehensive child care system and about what it is we need to do together to get one.

‘Values Added’ Advocacy

At its root – advocacy is about values. It is about valuing children, families and communities for who we are today and for what we can become tomorrow. Yet, sometimes our values are so much part of who we are that we fail to talk about them openly and proudly. In this keynote address, Rita Chudnovsky will encourage us to reaffirm the values that guide our work for and with young children. She will reflect on the values of Canada’s child care advocacy movement and will challenge and inspire us to put our values front and centre in the work before us.

WORKSHOPS

The Child Care Advocacy Agenda

Increasingly, early childhood educators understand that their ability to provide the best possible care for children depends on the effectiveness of our advocacy for public policies that support quality, inclusive accessible child care. Join experienced federal and provincial advocates for an up-to-date discussion about:

- The current state of child care policy and funding in BC and Canada
- The advocacy movement’s analysis of the current situation
- Current advocacy campaigns and messages

Building Our Advocacy Skills

Today, it is more important than ever for early childhood educators to be effective advocates. Join Rita Chudnovsky, Facilitator of the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum and long time advocate, for an interactive workshop on how we can use effective systemic advocacy skills and strategies to keep child care on the public agenda.

Participants will have an opportunity to:

- Explore the interrelated roles of individual, service and systemic advocacy
- Identify key elements of effective systemic advocacy
- Develop key messages and strategies for effective child care advocacy at the provincial and federal level.

Effective Advocacy Voices

This interactive workshop will help participants become more effective 'voices' for child care in their communities. Together we will explore advocacy that changes public attitudes, perceptions and behaviours. Participants will be introduced to 'Seven Steps of Advocacy' and will have a chance to consider key advocacy messages, campaigns and strategies that lead to better outcomes for children, families and communities.

What's Hot and What's Not in Child Care Advocacy

Over the last six months, BC family and child care providers have been dealing with our province's response to the loss of \$455 million in federal funds dedicated for child care. What this means for BC child care providers and the services they provide in group, family and school-aged settings is troubling indeed! This workshop will provide an update of the federal, provincial and community child care scene. Through interactive discussion and hands on activities, participants will build hot advocacy messages to keep child care front and centre on the public's agenda.

REGIONAL NETWORK SESSIONS

Invitation

The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum, an alliance of six provincial child care organizations, is committed to working collaboratively with child care and early childhood advocates across BC. We need to learn from each other so that:

- our advocacy messages reflect the experiences of children, families and service providers in diverse communities
- we can effectively get our messages out to a growing audience.

Join Rita Chudnovsky, the Facilitator of the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum for a discussion about your regional advocacy issues and initiatives, provincial advocacy priorities and strategies for supporting each other's advocacy efforts. Please come and add your voice and ideas.

Regional Networking Discussion Questions

- What ECD/child care tables and networks exist in this community? What are their mandates (information sharing, coordination, service planning, funding, advocacy)?
- What are the activities and priorities of these tables? Is child care represented and on the agenda of these tables?
- What are the key child care issues in your communities?
- How strong are the links between child care advocacy and advocacy for early childhood in this region? Are there barriers to strengthening these links?
- What advice do you have for the Advocacy Forum about ways to ensure that child care is part and parcel of the broader ECD advocacy agenda?

On June 10 and 11 Flood the Faxes for Child Care!

The situation in child care is still urgent.
Let your MLA know that if the government doesn't take action - the community will!

On Friday, May 28, government reached an historic settlement with striking community social services workers. And, after months of claiming that 'child care' would not be included in a settlement - the government responded to united community and union action and promised a 'separate but comparable' deal for the unionized child care agencies that have been part of joint negotiations.

This is an important victory. Centres are open again, children and families are receiving the care and support they need and the staff of these centres have been promised fair and equitable treatment with other community social service workers.

But, government has now made it clear that the rest of the child care sector will not share in the benefits of the agreement. Unlike 450 other community social services, 1500 child care agencies not involved in the recent negotiations will receive no additional funds. The only way they will be able to match or come close to the terms of the agreement is to raise parent fees. But parents are already paying over \$1 billion annually in child care fees in B.C and they can't pay any more!

Our message to government is simple: By October 1, 1999 we want

- Fair and equitable access for the child care sector to the wages and benefits of the recently negotiated settlement at no additional cost to parents.
- A commitment to and plan for a publicly funded child care system that provides all children and families with access to a range of quality, regulated child care services.

**The following organizations are calling on members, parents and advocates to:
Flood the faxes of MLAs and Cabinet Ministers on June 10 and 11**
(If you can't FAX on June 10 or 11 - do it as soon as possible)

Attached is a 1 page FAX message and a list of FAX numbers. Add your name, address, phone number and additional comments to the bottom of the FAX.

The B.C. Association of Child Care Services
The Coalition of Child Care Advocates
The Early Childhood Educators of B.C.
The School Aged Child Care Association of B.C.
Western Canada Family Child Care Association

URGENT FAX

99-06-10

To: Members of the Legislative Assembly Of B.C.
Members of B.C. Provincial Cabinet

Re: **Why Not Child Care?**

On Friday, May 28, government negotiators reached a tentative settlement with striking community social services workers. And, after months of claiming that 'child care' would not be included in the settlement - the government responded to united community and union action and promised a 'separate but comparable' deal for the unionized child care agencies that have been part of joint negotiations.

But, government has now made it clear that the rest of the child care sector will not share in the benefits of the agreement. Unlike 450 other community social services, 1500 child care agencies not involved in the recent negotiations will receive no additional funds. The only way they will be able to match or come close to the terms of the agreement is to raise parent fees. But parents are already paying over \$1 billion annually in child care fees in B.C and they can't pay any more!

Our message to you, our elected representatives, is simple. By October 1, 1999 we are calling on government to:

- Provide fair and equitable access for the child care sector to the wages and benefits of the recently negotiated settlement at no additional cost to parents.
- Commit to and plan for a publicly funded child care system that provides all children and families with access to a range of quality, regulated child care services.

As your constituent, and as a resident of B.C. who is concerned about children and families in our province - I am asking for your support.

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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V5Y 3W2
(604) 709-5661 tel
(604) 709-5662 fax

Participating Organizations:

BC Association of
Child Care Services

Coalition of Child
Care Advocates
of BC

Early Childhood
Educators of BC

School Age Child
Care Association

Westcoast Child
Care Resource
Centre

Western Canada
Family Child Care
Association of BC

Child Care -- Why Should I Care? Current Facts and their Implications for Parents, Workers & Providers

We are very concerned over recent events in BC's child care sector. Here are a few reasons why you might share our concern.

As a parent, I care because...

- ▶ *Children and parents need access to high quality, reliable child care.* The BC Child Care Funding Options Project (1998/99) reports that 31% of parents experienced a child care issue which interfered with finding or keeping a job, or pursuing education or training.
- ▶ *We can't afford higher fees.* BC parents already contribute \$1.3 billion annually to child care through fees; many are so over-burdened by the cost that they have no choice but to remove their children from high quality licensed, regulated programs and place them in less expensive but unregulated care.

As a child care worker, I care because...

- ▶ *Our wages should reflect our training and responsibility.* Child care workers are among the best educated community social services professionals. Many providers in licensed or regulated settings complete post-secondary education in the field. Yet, whether in centre or family settings, they are among the poorest paid in this sector, earning lower wages than colleagues who do similar work in health or post-secondary education settings.
- ▶ *We should be treated like our colleagues throughout this sector.* Workers from across the community social services sector will benefit from the recent wage settlement, like all those who were involved in its negotiation -- except for child care workers. While other underpaid workers will get much-needed raises, most child care workers will stand alone at the bottom of the wage scale.

As a provider of licensed or regulated services, I care because...

- ▶ *We cannot continue to balance the needs to pay our employees fairly and to keep fees affordable.* To attract and retain qualified, committed staff, employers must pay reasonable wages. Currently, the only way for employers to find the money to raise wages is to also raise parent fees. With higher parent fees, affordability is diminished.
- ▶ *We provide a valuable service to children, parents and the community.* Licensed, regulated child care enables parents to engage in work or study, helps children in their development and provides employment for skilled workers. It is truly a valuable community service, which requires money to pay for the trained staff and safe environment stipulated in provincial regulations. Without adequate funding, quality is compromised and licensed, regulated programs are vulnerable.

As a community, we care because...

- ▶ *Children deserve the best.* Researchers identify caregivers' skills, caring and consistent relationship with the children in their care as the most important elements in determining quality of care. Inadequate funding for child care attacks those vital elements by preventing employers from being able to pay fair wages, and results in an inability to achieve stable program operation and staffing.

What has brought us to this critical concern?

On May 28, 1999, the BC government and community social services workers from 140 unionized agencies, including 18 child care agencies, reached an historic settlement. That settlement will now be used as a template in negotiations with **all** other agencies in the community social services sector, **except child care agencies**.

While staff at those child care agencies will benefit from the settlement, remaining child care agencies -- the vast majority of child care programs in this province -- will be shut out of deals which will be extended to their counterparts throughout the community social services sector.

Since the BC government established the Community Social Services Employers' Association (CSSEA) in 1994, child care has been defined as a division of the community social services sector. Now, government is contravening its own policy and commitment by excluding child care from the broader sector.

This move is occurring despite the following:

- ▶ consensus by researchers, policy makers and legislators that quality child care contributes to a child's social, emotional, physical and intellectual development
- ▶ research showing that every \$1 invested in Canadian child care yields a \$2 return for children, families and society (*The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care*, 1998)
- ▶ guaranteed inclusion of child care as a CSSEA division under CSSEA by-laws, and approval of CSSEA divisions and constitutional items by the BC government

As a public service, child care receives BC government support in several ways. These include:

- ▶ subsidies to bridge the gap between what eligible parents can afford and what service providers need to charge to sustain their programs
- ▶ a low wage redress program to top up wages for low-paid child care workers
- ▶ programs providing funds to meet additional staffing needs for infants and toddlers, and for children with special needs
- ▶ resource and referral programs offering support, information and referrals to parents and care providers
- ▶ capital grants to help cover costs of emergency repairs, replacement of furnishings and relocation

While the BC government spends \$188.5 million on child care annually, most child care funding comes from individuals. Through service fees, parents contribute some \$1.3 billion annually to child care in BC. And, through low wages, child care workers also make a financial contribution to the services which employ them.

Our message is simple. By October 1, 1999, we are calling on the BC government to:

1. Provide fair and equitable access for the child care agencies to the wages and benefits established for the rest of the community social services sector
2. Commit to a publicly funded child care system that provides all children and families with access to a range of quality, regulated child care services

Please join us!

On the Record...

Throughout the 'nineties, bureaucrats and politicians have indicated an understanding of child care's importance. That understanding and a commitment to supporting and strengthening BC's child care sector have been articulated in statements such as those below -- all of them on the record.

"Quality child care gives children a head start by encouraging them to grow and learn and develop the skills they'll need later in life."

-- Joy MacPhail, Vancouver-Hastings MLA, MCF press release 1999:007, Jan. 28, 1999

"Children are important members of our community. I'm pleased that our government can help child care operators provide quality programs where children can play, learn and grow in safety."

-- Dale Lovick, Nanaimo MLA, MCF press release 1998:074, Dec. 23, 1998

"I am pleased to be part of a government that helps child care operators provide safe, quality experiences for children in their community....Our priority is to help centres provide quality, affordable care that supports the needs of families and local communities."

-- Lois Boone, Minister for Children and Families, MCF press release 1998:069, Dec. 7, 1998

"The [Child, Youth and Family Advocate] emphasizes early intervention programs, and our programs...are a solid investment in the lives of children and families. By offering supports earlier, children can grow up in healthier, safer environments."

-- Lois Boone, Minister for Children and Families, MCF press release 1998:02, May 7, 1998

"Today we know, more than ever before, the importance of a child's earliest years in shaping their development....By supporting communities in creating quality child care spaces, we provide opportunities for parents and safe, caring places for children to learn and grow."

-- Penny Priddy, Minister for Children and Families, MCF press release 1997:093, Dec. 9, 1997

"The Wage Supplement Initiative was introduced...as the first step in a long term strategy to financially recognize the contributions of child care workers. As child care is included in the public sector low wage redress strategy, we have had to wait for Treasury Board approval before proceeding with the 1995/96 increases."

-- David Gilbert, Director, MCF Child Care Branch, letter to child care operators, Feb. 26, 1996

"There has been an agreement with managers or child care providers that the 'low wage redress' ...will be used for wages only....The Community Social Services Employers' Association, which includes representatives from the child care sector, will be working on this in the following years. The Public Sector Employers' Council is responsible for addressing compensation and human resource practices in the broad public sector....

"While I talk about child care workers being the lowest paid in the human service area, it does not get away from the fact that most human service areas are low paid....For contracted human services ...we have had a coordinated program of increases to provide for fairer wages....That will then become, as with child care workers, the responsibility of the Public Sector Employers' Council, which has a responsibility for addressing the issues of fair wage compensation across the public sector.

-- Penny Priddy, Minister of Women's Equality, 1994 Legislative Session:3rd Session, Apr 20, 1994

“The Child Care Wage Supplement Initiative is one part of government’s commitment to providing high quality child care that meets the needs of families at a cost they can afford....The well-being of British Columbia’s children and families is a top priority for the British Columbia government.”

-- Penny Priddy, Minister for Women’s Equality, letter to child care societies, Apr. 5, 1994

“The child care wage supplement initiative is intended to be a first step towards addressing the low wages of child care staff. Future alternatives to address low wages will be considered as part of the recently announced consolidation of child care funding.

“In addition, the child care sector will be represented in the newly formed Community Social Services Employers’ Association (CSSEA) which is a member of the Public Sector Employers’ Council (PSEC). This offers an opportunity to address ongoing wage issues for child care staff, and for child care employers to have a voice in CSSEA.”

-- Jane Beach, Director of MCF’s Child Care Branch, letter to child care societies, Dec. 31, 1993

“1.01 (a) In these bylaws, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (2) ‘community social services’ ...includes:
 - (iv) daycare and related early childhood services”

“2.02 (a) The association shall have the following membership divisions:

- (1) child care and related early childhood services;”

“2.01 The members of the association are:

- (a) employers designated as public sector employers under the provisions of Part 1 section 1(g) of the *Public Sector Employers Act*;
- (b) employers receiving provincial government funding for the provision of community social services and accepted by the association on a voluntary basis;”

-- Community Social Services Employers’ Association By-laws, Oct. 1998

Prepared by the Child Care Advocacy Forum, June 1999. The Child Care Advocacy Forum is an alliance of the following child care organizations: BC Association of Child Care Services, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, Early Childhood Educators of BC, School Age Child Care Association, Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre and Western Canada Family Child Care Association of BC. For further details, please call The Advocacy Forum at (604) 709-5661.

Child Care in BC: A Recent Timeline

- 1991 Release of *Showing We Care: A Child Care Strategy for the 90's* report of the Task Force on Child Care which recommends salary enhancement grants to raise child care workers' salaries to a level reflective of their training and responsibility
- 1992 March--Judi Korbin appointed Commissioner of the Inquiry into the Public Service and Public Sector to propose a framework for human resources management that fosters an efficient, effective workforce in the six public service sectors (health, education, crown corporations, colleges and institutes, universities, community social services)
- 1993 Government adopts the recommendations made in the Korbin Commission Report:
1. That a Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) be created to link public sector employers and managers with government funders
 2. That employers' associations be created for each sector to coordinate human resource and labour relations among the employers in each sector
 3. That child care be included in the Social Services Sector
- Creation of PSEC and the Community Social Services Employers' Association (CSSEA) and its Child Care Division; community social services organizations receiving \$100,000+ in provincial government funding must join CSSEA (currently, organizations receiving \$100,000 and over 50% of their funding from the provincial government are mandated to join); CSSEA is a member of PSEC
- 1994 January--BC government, through the Ministry for Women's Equality under PSEC guidelines, introduces the Wage Supplement Initiative (WSI) providing low wage redress retroactively from October 1, 1993 and the Infant-Toddler Grant (ITIG) to subsidize higher costs of infant/toddler care
- March--BC Association of Child Care Services is formed to liaise between child care employers, government and CSSEA, and to provide networking opportunities for child care employers
- 1998 MCF collapses the WSI and I-T programs into the Compensation Contribution Program (CCP), which supports the wages of approximately 6,000 child care workers
- March 31--Contracts expire for about 10,000 workers from 4 unions (BC Government Services Employees' Union, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Hospital Employees' Union and Health Services Association) and employed by 140 CSSEA members, including 18 Child Care agencies
- July--Child care employers are invited to the CSSEA/union bargaining table and bargaining begins on a divisional basis; the divisions are eventually consolidated and "big table" bargaining begins on behalf of all 140 employers and the employees
- 1999 Child Care is CSSEA's third-largest division, with a membership of 144
- Ministry for Children and Families (MCF) offers a 3-year contract with the 0%-0%-2% steps agreed to in other public sectors, with additional funds for the lowest paid employees, to recognize the discrepancy between their wages and those of staff doing similar work in the health or education sector

Please turn over

March 8--Unionized employees involved in "big table" bargaining begin rotating strikes after there is little movement in negotiations

Late April--For the first time, MCF and PSEC take the public stance that child care will not be funded for settlements reached in "big table" bargaining and that, because it is not funded on a contract for service basis and most of its revenues come through fees, child care is not part of the public sector

May 3--Unionized employees move to a full-scale strike in response to child care's exclusion from government-funded settlements and for lack of parity with peers in the health sector

May 14--Complaint lodged by the BCGEU with the BC Labour Relations Board against PSEC and CSSEA, charging that they have bargained in bad faith

May 28--Government settles with striking community social services sector workers. While government agrees to fund wage increases for the 18 striking child care agencies, it proposes to do so under a "separate but comparable" arrangement. The government further commits to using the settlement as a template with all other agencies in the sector, except child care

Mid June--PSEC announces its intentions to change CSSEA membership criteria to remove the CSSEA's Child Care Division, to raise the minimum funding requirement for mandatory membership in CSSEA, and to eliminate voluntary membership in CSSEA for agencies receiving lower amounts in government funding, all in contravention of CSSEA's Constitution and By-laws

July 22--Government announces the formation of a new ministry, Social Development and Economic Security, and child care's transfer into it from MCF

July 1999

Developed by the Child Care Advocacy Forum, an alliance of the following child care organizations: BC Association of Child Care Services, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, Early Childhood Educators of BC, School Age Child Care Association, Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre and Western Canada Family Child Care Association of BC. For further details, please call the Advocacy Forum at (604) 709-5661.

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**Westcoast Child
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**Western Canada
Family Child Care
Association of BC**

MEDIA RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 22, 1999

Publicly Funded Child Care Essential for Social and Economic Development

“If Glen Clark’s decision to move child care into the new Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security means that his government sees quality child care as a key element in the social and economic development of children, families and communities - then it is good news”

says Darcelle Cottons, President of the B.C. Association of Child Care Services (BCACCS).

While there are some definite challenges for child care in the new Ministry, Cottons, and representatives of 5 other provincial child care organizations working together in the Child Care Advocacy Forum, are cautiously optimistic.

It is essential for child care to stay connected with other community services for children and families. More importantly, government cannot return to the days when child care was narrowly limited to a ‘welfare policy’ tied to labour force participation of low income parents.

Child care is a unique program that can meet a number of social and economic goals. At its core, quality child care is the most effective early childhood development strategy available to our communities. A strong typical child care system is also essential to meet the needs of children who require additional support. But, child care is equally important as a support to parents in their caregiving role, it enables families to participate in work and study and is part of a strategy to reduce poverty and develop strong communities.

“Government policies that build on this comprehensive vision of child care will make a real difference for children, families and society at large. The case for high quality child care has been well documented by respected leaders from inside and outside of the child care community. Now its time for action.”

says Susan Harney, chair of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum believes that all children are entitled to access quality early childhood experiences and programs. We are convinced that this requires visionary public policy, adequate public funding and a well planned implementation process.

The recently announced National Children’s Agenda, provide B.C. with a renewed opportunity to continue to show leadership by making child care a priority in federal/provincial negotiations.

2.....

We trust that Premier Clark and Minister Sihota are committed to supporting and developing a comprehensive system of child care services that can meet the social and economic needs of children, families, and the community. If this is the case, then the organizations in the Child Care Advocacy Forum are ready and willing to 'roll up our sleeves' and work with them to achieve this goal.

For further information contact –

Darcelle Cottons -

Susan Harney -

Sheila Davidson -

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Please Share this Package with Colleagues and Friends

99-09-03

Dear Members and Supporters,

Over the summer, developments affecting child care at the provincial and federal level continued to receive a lot of public and media attention. The Child Care Advocacy Forum met in late August to plan for our Fall activities. We paid particular attention to two developments that have a direct impact on how we advance our "Common Agenda and Vision for Child Care Services in B.C." (attached)

- In late July, provincial responsibility for child care was moved from the Ministry for Children and Families into the new Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security. Moe Sihota is now the Minister responsible for child care policies and programs in B.C. The Child Care Advocacy Forum issued a media release on July 22 (attached) in which we expressed 'cautious optimism' about the new home for child care. It is our analysis that the move may well signal the provincial government's intent to 'move on the child care file'. We think there may be a renewed opportunity to work towards a publicly funded child care system in B.C. and have indicated to government that, if they are committed to developing a comprehensive system of child care, we are ready and willing to work with them. As a first step, we are seeking a meeting with Minister Sihota to present our Vision and Agenda and hear about his intentions.
- Discussions about the next federal budget have started to heat up. The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and its partners have launched the "Children Can't Wait" campaign to ensure that the next federal budget is a Children's Budget (attached). But, media reports of the summer's Premier's Conference and the Liberal Party's caucus meeting make it clear that there is still no consensus amongst politicians about the need to invest in children.

These developments indicate that, while there are renewed opportunities for progress at the provincial and federal levels, change will only occur if there is informed support at the community level. We concluded that **now is the time to focus public and political attention on a positive vision for child care**. So, we are urging you to join us in a province wide campaign - "**Voicing the Child Care Vision**". Over a two week period, from **October 1 - 15**, we are asking communities across the province to plan activities and events that raise the profile of the "Common Agenda and Vision for Child Care Services in B.C." with the public and with politicians at the provincial and federal levels.

The attached package includes suggestions for a range of possible community activities and print materials that we hope will be helpful. Please feel free to copy any or all of these materials as handouts for the press, participants in your community event and others who may be interested. If you need more copies, please call Carol Anderson at Westcoast at (604) 709-5661.

It is very important for us to be able to share information about what is happening across the province with others. We have included a Community Response Form, which we hope you will complete and return as soon as possible.

Here's to a successful campaign.

Rita Chudnovsky - on behalf of the Child Care Advocacy Forum

From **OCTOBER 1 - 15** **VOICE THE CHILD CARE VISION!**

The Child Care Advocacy Forum, an alliance of six provincial child care organizations, is initiating a province wide campaign to **VOICE THE CHILD CARE VISION**. The goals of the campaign are to:

- raise the profile of the Advocacy Forum's "Common Agenda and Vision for Child Care Services in B.C." with the public and with provincial politicians
- add our voices to those who are calling on the federal government to make the next budget a Children's Budget.

From **October 1 - 15**, we are asking communities across the province to organize activities and events that can help achieve these goals. Here are some suggestions of things that you and your colleagues might do:

- "Chat up Child Care". Make an appointment with your local MLA and/or MP (ideally on October 1st but any time during the two week target dates would be fine). Take a small or large delegation with you. With provincial politicians, focus on the need for a publicly supported child care system and the Common Agenda and Vision. With federal politicians, focus on the next federal budget and the Children Can't Wait Campaign. This activity will work best if we can contact large numbers of politicians. (Materials attached)
- Participate in the "Face the Future" campaign - a parent initiative to send photographs of children to provincial politicians to highlight the need for high quality, affordable, accessible, publicly funded and accountable child care in B.C. (Materials attached)
- "Invite your MLA or MP to Tea". Ask your elected representatives to join you, the children and parents for snack. Use the time to highlight your program. Don't forget to invite the media - but be sure to let the politicians' staff know that the media will be present. Have copies of the Common Agenda and Vision ready to give to your guests.
- Create a "mall display". Find a busy public place that will allow you to set up a display. Your display could focus on a slogan such as '*I Care about Child Care*' or '*B.C. Works if Child Care Works*'. Passerbys could sign a petition to provincial and federal politicians. Better yet, passerbys could have their pictures taken with a Polaroid and sign the picture - creating a photographic petition. People could be asked to contribute the cost of their photo. Be sure to have lots of materials available to hand out, including information about the child care situation in your community.
- Hold a "festival or celebration". Get together with a number of child care programs in your area. Bring the children; parents; have entertainment; food and fun. Make signs that will bring people's attention to the importance of quality child care.
- Include materials in your newsletters and put a 'Parent Package' in each child's cubby.
- Organize a 'walk around the block' to show how many people use and work in child care programs throughout the community. Provide child care programs in your community with the same balloons or signs, and ask them to walk around their own block at a pre set time. Choose a time at the beginning or end of the day, so parents can participate. This is a great activity for Child Care Resource and Referral Programs to coordinate.

- Contact your local media. Write letters to your local newspapers. Phone your local paper and ask them to cover your community event. Ask to be a guest on a community radio show or submit a story for publication in the local press.
- Check to see if there are other community events being held in your area during the first two weeks of October. Find a way to join in to these activities by distributing materials at a "booth", hanging banners, etc.

Remember - these activities are just suggestions. You know what will work best in your community. Use your creativity and make this a positive event in your neighbourhood.

Regardless of what you do, it will be important to:

- be positive and stay focused on the benefits for children, families and communities
- be clear that we expect our governments to fund a strong child care system
- invite politicians to your events
- take lots of pictures, for posterity and future planning
- keep the Child Care Advocacy Forum in the communications loop

To help support your community events, we have attached the following print materials:

1. Child Care Services in B.C. - A Common Agenda and Vision (This is also available in Chinese, Spanish, Punjabi and Vietnamese. Call Westcoast for copies)
2. Child Care Advocacy Forum's Media Release of July 22
3. Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada's "Children Can't Wait" campaign
4. Parent Advocacy Network's "Face the Future" Campaign information
5. "Is Child Care A Good Public Investment" and "Quebec's New Family Policy" from the Childcare Resource and Research Unit

Please feel free to copy any or all of these materials as handouts for the press, participants at your community event and others who may be interested. If you need more copies, please call Carol Anderson at Westcoast at (604) 709-5661.

We have also included the following resource materials:

1. A list of media contacts around the province
2. Tips for Meeting the Press and Writing Speeches
3. A Community Organizers' Form to let us know what you are doing.
4. A list of organizational participants in the Child Care Advocacy Forum

**There are lots of ways to Voice the Vision but silence won't work!
The most important aspect of this campaign is that WE ALL DO SOMETHING!**

CHILD CARE RALLY PLANNING TIPS

The members of the Child Care Advocacy Forum are looking forward to working with you to plan for coordinated rallies on child care across the province on:

Friday, October 1, 1999

We suggest - 11:30 - 1:00 but choose a time that works best for your community

The rallies are a key part of our on-going campaign around two simple messages to the provincial government. By October 1, 1999 we are calling on the government to:

- Provide fair and equitable access for child care to the wages and benefits established for the rest of the community social services sector at no additional cost to parents
- Make a commitment to and plan for a publicly funded child care system that provides all children and families with access to a range of quality, regulated child care services.

If government is going to respond, we need to let them know that many parents, caregivers and community members across the province are prepared to act to back up our commitment to children and families! **We think that a series of coordinated rallies across the province, all with the same message can make a real difference.**

The Child Care Advocacy Forum can provide background information, press releases, rally handouts and suggestions - but if the strategy is going to be effective, individuals and groups in each community will need to do the 'on the ground' organizing.

Here are some suggestions for how you might proceed:

1. **Work with a group** - organizing a rally will require the involvement of a number of people. It would be best to work through an existing child care group in your community (eg. The local ECE branch) but, if necessary, you can create an ad hoc committee to organize the rally. **Seek co-sponsors** for the rally by approaching other service, advocacy women's and labour groups for support.
2. **Contact the Forum** to let us know that your community will be holding a rally. We will add the details of your rally to a centralized information package
3. **Choose the location and tone** that will work for your community's rally. Two different approaches to consider are:
 - **A family style rally** - Choose a central, public location where parents can join the rally on their lunch hour. In this format, children can also participate. Disruption to services will be minimal, but this approach needs to attract lots of people to be effective.

- **A demonstration** - Choose a location with a clear political connection such as an MLA or Cabinet members offices. This approach is more 'political' and should be considered in communities with Cabinet Ministers. It can be effective with relatively small numbers of demonstrators and it might be possible for some people to participate in the demonstration without major disruptions in services. Remember, this is not a labour action - so you aren't trying to disrupt the operations of the office.

Be sure to check out the rules and regulations about using public spaces, holding demonstrations or marches etc. Get the necessary permits, approvals and insurance.

4. **Identify your media strategy.** The Forum will prepare and distribute sample press releases, but you will need a local media plan. Early on, think about your approach to the media. You want to let the media know about the rally in advance and then to be prepared to speak with the media at the rally. Its best to have 1 or 2 people who are designated to speak on behalf of the rally organizers.
5. **Prepare signs, buttons and handouts.** The Forum will be able to provide some materials for use at your rally but visible messages like signs, banners, balloons, buttons, etc. will have to be done locally. Some possible slogans that seem to strike a cord include:

Children can't wait	Love the job, hate the pay
Child Care - a support for all	Child Care = B.C. won't work without it
6. **Plan a lively program.** Its always good to hear from a number of 'voices', but try to keep the speech making short and punchy. You may want to have a parent, a care provider and a respected community member from another sector each speak briefly. Include the provincial messages and add local details about the chid care situation. The organizations participating in the Forum will prepare and distribute messages of solidarity that can be part of your program. We will also send out 'speech writing tips' if that would be helpful. If you are planning a family style rally, consider some entertainment - especially if children are involved.
7. **Have an action plan.** People get energized by rallies and are often eager to take some further action. Plan and announce things that people can do after the rally such as a petition, letter writing campaign, meeting with the MLA, etc.
8. Let us know how it went! Contact the Advocacy Forum after your rally to let us know how it went and we will prepare a provincial summary of action.

We hope that this is helpful. BUT - you know your community best - so be creative and plan a rally that builds on your community's strengths and interests.

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School Aged
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Westcoast Child
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Western Canada
Family Child
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of BC

MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 21, 1999

**“MINISTER SIHOTA, THERE ARE
ACHIEVABLE CHILD CARE SOLUTIONS”**

Today, Minister Moe Sihota took a bold and important step in releasing his working paper on child care - “Building A Better Future for British Columbia’s Kids”. The paper provides an honest and accurate description of the current realities facing children, families and child care services in B.C.

Minister Sihota acknowledges that many of B.C.’s families and children still cannot access high quality, affordable early childhood services and he is calling for a broad public discussion about how we can solve the problem.

In response, Susan Harney of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C., says:

“We know there are solutions for child care but it will take political will and public investment at the federal and provincial levels. When we look at Quebec’s child care initiative, we see what can happen when there is a commitment to build a system that provides all children with access to quality services.”

The other members of the Child Care Advocacy Forum agree and offer Minister Sihota and his federal counterparts the following advice:

- All of the ‘first step’ options put forward by Minister Sihota to address the immediate problems of affordability and accessibility will be welcomed by many families and child care services. However, these are only short term measures.
- The agenda we need is one that entitles ALL children to access quality early childhood services, regardless of the economic or employment status of their parents.
- This will require a significant increase in funding from the federal and provincial governments so that child care can move from the current user fee system to one that, like other public programs, is funded through the tax system.

Minister Sihota says he is committed to solving the problem - we applaud his initiative. He says that the province can’t do it alone. We couldn’t agree more and add our voices to those calling on the federal government to make child care a priority in the next budget. And, Sihota is asking for public input. We welcome the opportunity to participate, but **we remind government that the situation is urgent and our children can’t wait.**

- 30-

Contact: Rita Chudnovsky - Facilitator
Child Care Advocacy Forum
(604) 709-5661

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School Aged Child
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Westcoast Child Care
Resource Centre

Western Canada
Family Child Care
Association of BC

99-11-01

NOW is the Time to Speak out on Child Care!

On Thursday, Oct. 21, 1999 Moe Sihota, the Minister now responsible for child care in B.C., released a discussion paper on child care - "Building a Better Future for British Columbia' Kids".

The paper paints a true picture of what families and child care workers have known for some time - quality child care services are still not affordable or accessible for most children and families in B.C. Sihota's paper confirms that B.C. families now pay \$1.35 billion a year in child care fees, while the provincial government contributes under \$200 million annually. The paper confirms that child care workers continue to subsidize child care through unacceptably low wages and inadequate working conditions.

The release of this paper comes at a time when the federal government is still debating its priorities for the next budget. Will it be tax cuts or, after two decades of broken promises, federal funds for a national child care program?

Minister Sihota has said that he is willing to champion child care at the federal and provincial levels **if British Columbians tell him that increased public spending on child care is important and worthwhile.**

The Child Care Advocacy Forum, an alliance of 6 major provincial child care organizations that bring together close to 4000 individuals and groups, knows that a large majority of Canadians **do** support increased public investment in early childhood services. However, we are convinced that if we can't mobilize this voice **NOW**, an opportunity to make progress on child care probably won't come again for many years.

We understand that while you have been generally supportive of child care in the past, it has not been your top priority. But, our message to you today is simple –

Speak out now for child care or the needs of children, families and workers will be forgotten for another decade.

We are asking you to join our campaign to tell Minister Sihota that **we expect action on child care during his government's current term of office.** Here's what you can do:

- Endorse the attached Child Care Advocacy Forum position.
- Write letters to Moe Sihota, B.C.'s Minister of Social Development and Economic Security and Paul Martin, the federal Minister of Finance calling for **action.** (Please send us copies of your letters)

- Distribute the two attached letters to Moe Sihota and Paul Martin to your membership and collect and mail signed copies
- Publish the attached Op Ed piece in your next union newsletter.
- Support the work of the Child Care Advocacy Forum through a direct financial contribution or by sharing some of your organizational resources. For example, you might be able to print and mail materials for the Forum.

We, the members of the child care community, are doing our very best to mobilize a strong response to Sihota's invitation for public discussion. While we hope that the strength of our conviction will offset our limited resources; we cannot do it alone!

Please make this a priority and act now.

We would be happy to meet with you or members of your union to discuss this issue and other ways that we can work together. You can contact us by leaving a message for the Advocacy Forum's Facilitator, Rita Chudnovsky, at 709-5661.

Sincerely,

Darcelle Cottons, BC Association of Child Care Services
Susan Harney, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Sheila Davidson, Early Childhood Educators of BC
Ann Howe, School Age Child Care Association
Sherrie Jamieson, Western Canada Family Child Care Association
Karen Norman, Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre

URGENT - SPEAK OUT FOR CHILD CARE NOW!

Dear Parents and Child Care Colleagues,

The time for action is NOW!

On Thursday, Oct. 21, the new Minister responsible for child care in B.C., Moe Sihota, released a discussion paper on child care - "Building a Better Future for British Columbia' Kids". The paper paints a true picture of the current realities facing children, families and child care providers in B.C. and suggests some options for moving forward.

Minister Sihota has said that he wants to see affordable, accessible child care. He is willing to champion child care at the federal and provincial levels and is calling on the federal government to use its current budget surplus for child care. But, he needs **public support** to make it happen.

This is our chance to rally the community and show the provincial and federal governments that we support action on child care. Here's what you can do today:

By November, 15

- Copy and distribute the two enclosed letters - one to Minister Sihota and one to the Federal Minister of Finance, Paul Martin - to staff, parents, neighbours, friends, colleagues and URGE EVERYONE to sign!!!!
- set a goal of having at least **50%** of the parents in your program send the letters (There are 60,000 licensed child care spaces in B.C. - imagine the impact of 30,000 letters)

Think about it - this is the first time in a long time that a Minister has spoken out so strongly in support of child care. But, he has said that before he can take action, he needs a loud and clear message that the public wants to make an investment in early childhood. We know that the majority of Canadians support increased public spending on child care. If we are silent now - this opportunity will pass us by.

Make this a priority and MAIL THOSE LETTERS BY NOV. 15, 1999. Why not make it easier for families in your program and offer to mail all of their letters as a package? Remember, NO postage is needed on the letter to Paul Martin but you will need a stamp on the letter to Moe Sihota.

We'll be in touch about the next steps we can take together.

This is our chance to help make it happen. The Children Can't Wait

For copies of the attached letters OR Sihota's Discussion Paper, call your local Child care Resource and Referral Program.

The Honorable Moe Sihota
Minister of Social Development and Economic Security
PO Box 9047 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Sihota,

I am writing to **express my support for your commitment to improve the child care system in B.C.** as outlined in your discussion paper "Building a Better Future for British Columbia's Kids." The paper clearly acknowledges the many challenges and concerns facing families, children and the child care field. I am also pleased to see that the paper is action oriented - and moves from a description of the problem to possible solutions.

A strong, stable, affordable system of high quality early childhood services must be a centrepiece of our collective responsibility to support families. For, as the National Council on Welfare demonstrated in its recent report (1999)

Many social programs support families but child care is the backbone of them all.

There is vast evidence that investing in the early years is critical to the healthy development of ALL children; indeed it is the wisest investment we can make.

While the 'first steps' outlined in your discussion paper are a good start in addressing the immediate problems of affordability and accessibility - they are only stop gap measures. The **provincial and federal governments** need to make a commitment to a publicly funded system that entitles ALL children to access affordable, quality early childhood services.

Therefore, I strongly urge you to:

- push the federal government to make its next budget a **Children's Budget** with a specific allocation for early childhood development services
- show the federal government that B.C. is serious by making a significant increase in **provincial spending on child care** in your government's next budget
- model B.C.'s program on **Quebec's Child Care Program**, which provides affordable access to quality child care spaces for all children regardless of the economic or employment status of their families.

While public discussion on child care is welcome, I remind you that -

The situation is urgent and our children can't wait.

Sincerely,

Name and address (Print)

(Signature)

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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 3, 1999

**TAX CUTS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR
NATIONAL CHILD CARE PROGRAM**

Yesterday, Paul Martin, the federal Minister of Finance told Canadians that we can expect budget surpluses, totaling \$95.5 billion over the next 5 years. He called on Canadians to let him know how we think the surplus should be spent.

Since then, the airwaves have been given over to those who see tax cuts as the single most important priority. They claim to speak for the majority, but recent polls indicate that, when given open-ended choices, Canadians would rather see our surplus invested in social programs like Medicare, education, job creation, child poverty, child care, and debt reduction.

There are those who argue that tax cuts are the best way to support families with young children. They suggest that if Canadians paid lower taxes, one parent could afford to stay at home and care for young children or that families would be able to afford child care services. However, Marc Lee of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives points out:

“Previous examples of provincial tax cuts in Canada, and federal and state tax cuts in the US, haven’t made a real difference for average income families. A typical family might save enough money to buy a cup of coffee every day but certainly not enough to meet their child care needs.”

Canadians are being misled if they think that tax cuts can solve the child care crisis in this country.

“Our monthly fees for infant care are \$880.00 a month,” says Sheila Davidson, Director of Child Care Services at Simon Fraser University. “Think about it - tax cuts are never going to make that affordable for many families who want and need our services.”

Our message to Mr. Martin is clear. Now is the time to spend a significant share of our budget surplus in a quality system of early childhood services that is available to all children, regardless of their families’ economic or employment status. Now is the time to act on 30 years of research that clearly demonstrates the social and economic benefits of a public investment in children’s early years.

For almost two decades, federal politicians have told Canadians that we can’t afford a child care program in Canada. Well now we can. If Mr. Martin and his government fail to act - all of their lofty words about the future of Canada’s children will be worthless indeed.

For further information, contact:
Sheila Davidson

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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Participating Organizations:

BC Association
of Child Care
Services

Coalition of Child
Care Advocates
of BC

Early Childhood
Educators of BC

School Aged
Child Care
Association

Westcoast Child
Care Resource
Centre

Western Canada
Family Child
Care Association
of BC

99-11-30

Dear Member,

The campaign to respond to the discussion paper - "Building a Better Future for B.C. Kids" is off to a great start - but our work is far from done!

While many of you have told Minister Sihota that you expect action, we still do not have a firm commitment from him and his government that they will act. In fact, daily we hear that the budget is being frozen and that no decisions can be made before the NDP leadership convention.

It is time for us to turn up the heat - so we ask you to take the following steps:

1. **Keep those letters coming!** Our letter campaign to Minister Sihota is going well. Thanks to all of you who responded. He has received over 2000 letters so far but we can't stop until we reach our target of 30,000 letters. We also need more individualized letters - so, even though Nov. 19 has come and gone - **keep 'em coming.**
2. **Meet with your MLA!** Our next big push is to meet face-to-face with NDP MLAs in their own constituencies. This is the way to make child care a top priority. Put together a small delegation and make an appointment before the Holiday Break. Try to include some parents. If your MLA is not in the NDP, meet with them and ask them what they will do if their party forms government. We have included a suggested agenda for the meeting and a 1 page 'position' that you can leave with them. **Make an appointment today!**
3. **Make child care an issue in the NDP leadership race!** While all of our organizations are non-partisan, it is clear that many decisions are on hold until the NDP elects a new leader. Regardless of our personal political beliefs, we need to make sure that all of the leadership candidates are committed to moving forward on child care. We have attached the schedule for leadership forums - these are open to the public. Attend the meeting in your area and ask each candidate what they will do for child care if elected. **Book the date now!**

The government has said they will receive comments on the discussion paper until Jan. 31, 2000. But, we know that the provincial budget is being developed now. So far, our message has been positive and supportive - but if there is no firm commitment of dollars and direction so - it will be time to 'get a little nasty' again.

Call us at our new phone numbers (including a toll free line) and let us know how it's going in your community.

**CHILD CARE ADVOCACY FORUM
RESPONSE TO
“BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE FOR B.C. KIDS”
December, 1999**

On Oct. 21, 1999 Moe Sihota, the Minister of Social Development and Economic Security released a discussion paper on child care entitled “Building a Better Future for British Columbia’s Kids.” The discussion paper provides information on the current situation facing children, families and child care providers in B.C. and describes a range of possible options for increased provincial spending on child care.

Minister Sihota has invited British Columbians to engage in public discussion and provide advice to government on the options we prefer. While public discussion is welcome, **there is an urgent need for provincial and federal action.**

The Child Care Advocacy Forum, an alliance of six provincial child care organizations, asks you to endorse and communicate the following position to the provincial and federal governments:

1. The discussion paper sets out some first steps in addressing immediate problems of affordability, accessibility and low wages in the child care sector. While all of these options will make a difference for some families and caregivers, **they are only stop gap measures.**
2. The provincial and federal governments need to make a commitment to a publicly funded system that **entitles ALL children to affordable, quality early childhood services.**
3. Specifically we call on:
 - **The Federal Government** to make the next budget a **Children’s Budget** with a first year allocation of \$2 billion for the development of provincial and territorial systems of early childhood development services.
 - **The Provincial Government** to develop a comprehensive child care system for B.C. that moves child care from the current user fee system to one that is publicly funded. This will require:

public policy that, like in Quebec, entitles every child to quality child care regardless of the economic or employment status of parents

a significant increase in spending on child care in the next provincial budget to raise the province’s share to 50% of total child care costs in B.C.

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MLA MEETING PACKAGE

Thank you for agreeing to organize a meeting with your MLA.

The campaign to respond to the discussion paper - "Building a Better Future for B.C. Kids" is off to a great start - but our work is far from done!

While many of you have told Minister Sihota that we expect action, we still do not have a firm commitment from government to act. Daily we hear that the budget is frozen and that major decisions are on hold until the NDP elects a new leader.

It is time for us to turn up the heat - so here is some information to help you **set up a meeting with your MLA!**

Our top priority between now and the Holiday Break is to have parents, child care providers and advocates **meet with every NDP MLA** in their own constituencies. We believe that this is the way to make child care a top priority with the NDP caucus and government.

We are including the following materials to help with your meeting:

- a **tip sheet** to help you prepare for the meeting
- a suggested **agenda** for the meeting
- some good responses to things your MLA might say
- a copy of our **Common Agenda and Vision** for Child Care Services in B.C. to leave with your MLA
- a copy of the Child Care Advocacy Forum's **Response to the discussion paper** to leave with your MLA.
- an **MLA Meeting Report Form** to send us after your meeting

If your MLA is not in the NDP, you should still try to meet with them. Ask them if they will push the government to act on child care and what they will do for child care if their party forms the next government.

In the meantime, keep **those letters coming!** So far, Minister Sihota has received over 4000 letters but we can't stop until we reach our target of 30,000 letters. We also need more individualized letters from parents, caregivers and organizations. So, even though Nov. 19 has come and gone - **keep on writing.**

Please make an appointment with your MLA today!

Call us at our new phone numbers (including our toll free line - 1-877-361-1116) and let us know how its going in your community.

The members of the Child Care Advocacy Forum want to thank everyone who is working so hard on this campaign. We wish you all a very happy Holiday Season and New Year. May 2000 be a year of real victories for children and child care.

TIPS FOR MEETINGS WITH MLAs

1. **Call your MLA's local constituency office, identify yourself as a constituent** and ask for a meeting to talk about child care. Be clear that you need to talk to them NOW about government's paper "Building a Better Future for B.C. Kids".
2. **Don't take NO for an answer.** If your MLA is reluctant to meet with you, remind them that their government has asked for public input and debate about child care. Let them know that there is a growing provincial campaign calling on their government to act on child care and that you expect them to do their part.
3. **Find 2 or 3 people to go to the meeting with you.** Be sure to **include parents** who are **voters in this riding**. Get your group together before the meeting to plan who will cover each item on the agenda. *A suggested agenda is attached.*
4. Help **send a consistent message** to every MLA by highlighting the key points outlined in the attached "Suggested Agenda"
5. **Ask your MLA for a firm commitment** that they will raise child care issues in caucus and will support action on child care during this government's term of office.
6. **Leave a package of materials** with your MLA including two attached documents from the Child Care Advocacy Forum:
 - the "Common Agenda and Vision for Child Care Services in B.C."
 - the "December, 1999 Response to "Building a Better Future for B.C. Kids".
7. **Get in touch with others in your riding who may also be setting up meetings.** Its just fine if your MLA has a few meetings on child care, but touch bases with some key contacts including members of the Provincial Child Care Council who live in your community; the President of your local branch of ECE B.C. and your local Child Care Resource and Referral Program, etc.

Remember - the MLA is your elected representative. It is their job to listen to and represent your concerns. You don't have to be an expert or have all the answers. If they ask a question you can't answer, tell them you will get back to them with the information and then return to your key points. Stay focused on your own experiences, let your MLA know that you expect action and you can't go wrong!

SUGGESTED AGENDA FOR MLA MEETINGS

1. **Introductions**
 - Introduce all group members, highlighting their connection to child care.
2. **Building a Better Future for B.C. Kids**
 - Don't assume your MLA knows about this discussion paper. Make sure they understand that their government has asked for public debate and input. Tell them that thousands of British Columbians have already told Minister Sihota that we expect action.
 - Let them know that, while the discussion paper paints an accurate picture of the problems and challenges, it doesn't go far enough!
3. **Local Issues**
 - Describe some concrete child care problems facing families, children and child care providers in your community.
4. **Key Messages** - Highlight these key points:
 - The options included in "Building a Better Future for B.C. Kids" **are only stop gap measures** and will not build a child care system for B.C.
 - We are calling on the federal and provincial governments to make a commitment to a publicly funded system that **entitles ALL children to affordable, quality early childhood services**.
 - The next **Federal Budget** must be a **Children's Budget** with a first year allocation of \$2 billion for the development of child care services.
 - The **Provincial Government** must develop a child care system for B.C. that entitles every child to quality child care regardless of the economic or employment status of parents.
 - We need a **significant increase in spending on child care in the next provincial budget** to raise the province's share to 50% of total child care costs in B.C.

(For more details on these key messages, see the attached "Response...")
4. **Get a Commitment**
 - Tell your MLA that you expect them to raise child care in caucus and to support action on child care during this government's term of office.
 - Press them for a firm commitment to act.
5. **Next Steps**
 - Ask for a date by which your MLA will report back to you on what they have done.
 - Leave your package of materials.
 - Thank them for their time.
 - Remind them that child care matters to their constituents.

GOOD RESPONSES TO TOUGH QUESTIONS

If your MLA says:

Our government has already done a lot for child care.

The public doesn't want us to spend more money.

It will cost too much and we don't have the money.

You can respond:

Its true that the NDP has increased the child care budget and created more spaces. But, child care is still too expensive, wages are still too low and services are still fragile. There has been no increase in subsidy rates for over 5 years. The last time we went this long without an increase was 1984-89, under the Social Credit government. While we don't think the subsidy system is the way to go, we do expect this government to act on its party's long standing child care policy.

On this issue, the public is ahead of the politicians. A poll conducted in Oct. 1999 shows that more than 75% of British Columbians want the federal and provincial governments to give a high priority to public funding for quality child care services in their upcoming budgets.

There is always money for what politicians decide is a priority (eg. Fast Ferries, a new bridge in Kelowna). We spend \$28 billion a year in Canada on public education (\$42 billion when we include post-secondary education) but only \$1 billion on child care even though the research clearly proves that the early years matter most. We know that for every \$1 invested in child care for all, there will be a \$2 return. The real problem is not lack of funds, it is that young children and their families are still not a priority for government.

If your MLA says:

How much will it cost?

Wouldn't it be better to put more money into families' hands by reducing taxes?

You should go to the Federal government. They have cut our transfer payments, and we can't do anything unless they provide funds.

You can respond:

Parents now spend \$1.35 billion a year on child care fees in B.C. and the province spends under \$200 million which is less than 15% of the total cost. We are calling for government to increase spending in the next budget to cover 50% of the total costs. This will still be considerably less than the \$7 billion spent on health care in B.C. and the \$3.7 billion spent on K -12 education. Yet, we know that quality child care improves health and education outcomes for children. With matching funds from the federal government, increased provincial spending will make a significant difference. How much are you prepared to spend on child care in the next budget?

Tax cuts are not a substitute for a comprehensive child care program. Economists report that examples of provincial tax cuts in Canada, and federal and state tax cuts in the US, haven't made a real difference for average income families. A typical family might save enough money to buy a cup of coffee every day but certainly not enough to meet their child care needs or to make it possible for one parent to leave paid employment. Tax cuts will not create one more quality child care space. Recent polls indicate that, when given open-ended choices, Canadians would rather see our surplus invested in programs like Medicare, education, job creation, child poverty, child care, and debt reduction.

We are actively lobbying the Federal government for funding and expect the province to take a leadership role in making child care a priority at the federal/provincial tables. But, we expect this province to act regardless of what happens federally. NDP party policy calls for strong public policy on child care and this government should act on those principles.

**CHILD CARE ADVOCACY FORUM
MLA MEETING RESPONSE FORM**

YOUR NAME: _____

ORGANIZATION _____

PH _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____

Address _____

YOUR PROVINCIAL RIDING _____

NAME AND PARTY AFFILIATION OF YOUR MLA _____

If you have met with your MLA, please answer the following questions:

Date of meeting: _____

Who attended the meeting (names and relevant affiliations)?

What were the key points raised at the meeting? How did your MLA respond and what commitments did s/he make?

Were there questions that you felt unable to answer? If so, which ones?

If you have been unable to meet with your MLA, please let us know why.

Please fax this form to Nicky Byres c/o Child Care Advocacy Forum at (604) 709-5662

THANK YOU!

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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99-12-06

The Honorable Andrew Petter
Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Parliament Buildings - Room 301
PO Box 9059, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Petter,

We understand that on Dec. 17, 1999 you will be representing B.C. at Social Union discussions in Ottawa. At these discussion, members of the Child Care Advocacy Forum are counting on you to make federal/ provincial cooperation on **child care a top priority.**

The Child Care Advocacy Forum of B.C. is an alliance of six provincial child care organizations that bring together over 4000 individuals, groups and child care services in B.C. We work to advance the attached "Common Agenda and Vision for Child Care Services in B.C." We know that the upcoming Social Union meetings are happening at a critical time for families and children in B.C. and Canada.

After more than 20 years of inaction and broken promises, there is now a real opportunity to make progress on the child care agenda. The Federal government has a budget surplus; a majority of Canadian's support more public spending on child care; and the Social Union provides a process for initiating new social programs in Canada.

However, progress is not guaranteed. We know that if there are no provincial 'champions' for child care at federal/provincial tables, the federal government will have an excuse for yet more inaction. We need you, a member of a government that says it is committed to child care, to take leadership on this crucial issue. We expect you to call on the federal government to make its next budget a Children's Budget with a specific first year allocation of \$2 billion to support provincial/territorial development of child care systems. We expect you to show that B.C. is serious by making a significant increase in provincial spending on child care in your government's next budget. And, we expect you to work with the other provinces to ensure progress.

As you know, your government is in the middle of a broad public discussion about how to solve the urgent child care problems facing families, children and care givers. Your colleague, Minister Sihota, has already heard from thousands of British Columbians who want both levels of government to make a commitment to a publicly funded system that entitles all children to affordable, quality care. This message is echoed by more than 75% of British Columbians who want the federal and provincial governments to give a high priority to public funding for quality child care services in their upcoming budgets. (Oct., 1999 - McIntyre and Mustel Research Ltd.) **The majority of British Columbians who want action on child care, are counting on you to represent them at the upcoming Social Union talks.**

Sincerely,

Rita Chudnovsky, Facilitator - Child Care Advocacy Forum

cc. The Honourable Moe Sihota - Minister of Social Development and Economic Security
Lyn Tait, Deputy Minister - Intergovernmental Relations

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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January 10, 2000

The Honorable Moe Sihota
Minister of Social Development and Economic Security
Parliament Buildings - Room 247
PO Box 9058, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Sihota,

As you know, the members and partners of the Child Care Advocacy Forum have been working actively to mobilize a response to your discussion paper "Building A Better Future for British Columbia's Kids". To date, you have received over 7000 responses, the vast majority of which call for a publicly funded system that entitles all children to access quality care, regardless of the economic or employment status of their families.

In addition to this mobilization, the Advocacy Forum has worked hard to extend the debate on child care. We are actively lobbying Paul Martin about the upcoming Federal Budget and are communicating with your colleague Andrew Petter about B.C.'s position at federal/provincial tables. We are organizing a broad response to Minister Ramsey's discussion paper on the upcoming Provincial Budget and are meeting with NDP caucus members in their constituencies across the province. We have successfully put 'child care' on the agenda of the NDP leadership race and all of the current candidates have publicly declared their support for action on child care.

Since assuming responsibility for child care, you have assured us that, while you will act on child care, you wanted to hear from British Columbians before making firm commitments. Recently, you extended the deadline for public consultation until February 29, 2000.

While we fully agree that all interested British Columbians must have an opportunity to participate in the debate, we are concerned that delays may undermine the opportunity to make significant progress in upcoming federal and provincial budgets. We believe that the central themes of the public response are clearly outlined in the "Interim Report on Responses to *Building A Better Future for British Columbia's Kids*" (Jan, 10, 2000). While discussions about specific implementation details are essential, these discussions will only be productive if they are based on a firm governmental commitment to a long term vision and adequate financial resources.

We are therefore seeking a meeting with you, at your earliest convenience, to discuss the next steps. We will be asking that you demonstrate leadership in responding to the central messages of the Interim Report by making firm and specific commitments to policy and funding action.

Please contact me at the numbers above to discuss possible dates and times. We look forward to your speedy response.

Sincerely,

Rita Chudnovsky - Facilitator, Child Care Advocacy Forum

cc. Sharon Manson Singer - Deputy Minister, MSDES

CHILD CARE ADVOCACY FORUM RESPONSE TO

The Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security's
"Interim Report on Responses to *Building a Better Future for British Columbia's Kids*"
January, 2000

On January 10, 2000 the Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security (MSDES) released an Interim Report on the responses received to date on its child care Discussion Paper - "Building a Better Future for British Columbia's Kids". (*Both reports are available on line at www.sdes.gov.bc.ca*).

The Child Care Advocacy Forum, an alliance of 6 provincial child care organizations, views the Interim Report as a significant development in the discussion about public policy on child care in B.C. While the Report highlights high levels of public support for significant action on child care it also indicates government's continuing focus on 'stop gap', bandaid solutions to the child care crisis in B.C.

THE GROWING CONSENSUS FOR A PUBLICLY FUNDED SYSTEM

As of January 4, 2000 - over 7200 people had responded to the Discussion Paper. This reflects extraordinary collective efforts of people across the province to ensure that government heard a loud and clear message - child care is an urgent issue and action is needed now! The fact that:

*The vast majority of respondents call on the provincial and federal governments to create a **publicly funded child care system** that ensures all families - regardless of their economic or employment status - have access to good quality, affordable child care. (Page 2, Interim Report, emphasis added)*

clearly demonstrates our message resonates with British Columbians. If government is genuinely prepared to act on what it heard - then this is the message that needs to drive their actions.

PUBLIC CONSENSUS NOT LINKED TO POSSIBLE ACTIONS

The Interim Report acknowledges wide spread public support for a publicly funded, universally accessible system but seems to have missed an important message about possible immediate actions.

Based on the "Breakdown of Responses" highlighted in the Interim Report, we are confident that the vast majority of respondents also told the Ministry that, while immediate action to make child care more affordable and accessible will be welcomed by many and will make a difference for some, they are only **stop gap measures**.

This position has been a key piece of the Advocacy Forum's letter writing campaign and public response to "Building A Better Future for British Columbia's Kids". The fact that the Interim Report omits any mention of this perspective is alarming indeed! And, the Report's silence on the implications of this message for the 'options' in the initial Discussion Paper indicates that government does not yet understand what they are hearing.

We did not do a detailed analysis of each 'option' in the Discussion Paper for 2 reasons:

- In spite of discussions with the Minister and his staff about the need to include the option of a publicly funded system in the Discussion Paper, this did not occur. It was left to the community to put this option clearly on the agenda.
- The 'options' in the Discussion Paper reflect a fragmented, piecemeal approach. Essentially, the options are a list of possible increases to existing child care funding programs. Simply choosing 'priorities' from this incomplete, grab bag will not move child care away from a user fee system.

However, given the Interim Report's continuing focus on these stop gap measures, it is important to highlight some fundamental problems with a few of the options in more detail.

1. **Increases to Subsidy Rates**

Over \$120 million of the \$188 million spend by the Province on child care goes into the child care Subsidy Program. This program provides low-income working or studying parents with a subsidy to help cover their child care costs. B.C. is only one of 2 provinces that provides subsidies for unregulated care, and over 50% of the subsidy budget goes to this form of care.

Subsidy rates are set by the provincial government and are currently 16-23% below the monthly cost of group care. Subsidized parents pay the difference between their subsidy and the actual cost of their care. For infant care, this difference can be over \$400 a month.

Subsidy rates have not been raised in B.C. for over 5 years - the longest period without an increase in 2 decades. Low income parents cannot afford to pay the difference and child care programs cannot sustain quality programs. In this context, increases to the child care subsidy rates to reflect the real cost of care seems like an obvious answer and it is no surprise that when asked to choose from the list of options in the Discussion Paper, many respondents support increases in subsidy rates to reflect the actual cost of care.

However, increases to subsidy rates, on their own, will not solve the problem because:

- Increased subsidy rates will make no difference for the majority of parents who do not receive subsidies and will be of limited help for low income parents. Child care fees in B.C. are linked to subsidy rates. History shows that increased subsidy rates lead to increased fees. Soon, low income parents will be back in the same situation and moderate and middle income parents, who receive no subsidy, will be worse off.
- The subsidy system is a demand side approach - it assumes that there is a supply of quality child care services from which families can choose. It does not support the on-going operation of stable, viable programs. Economic studies demonstrate that this approach has not worked for child care, particularly in areas where need is greatest. Without operating funds to sustain a range of quality programs, closures of programs will continue.

2. **Increased Child Care Spaces on School Sites**

The Discussion Paper reports that, as a result of the Portable Reduction Strategy of the Ministry of Education, 1200 portables now used for classrooms could be available for future use. The Paper suggests that 500 of these portables could be purchased, moved (if necessary) refitted and equipped to create an additional 10,000 new child care spaces on school sites.

Leaving aside the issue of why portables that are seen as unacceptable for children while they are in school are seen as a 'boon' for child care, the option has some obvious appeal. There is a definite need for more licensed child care spaces and a growing need for care for school-aged children. Families would be well served if a comprehensive range of services are offered in one location and, for many, school sites are an ideal location. Using existing publicly owned facilities is also a cost effective approach.

However, simply creating more licensed child care spaces, whether on school sites or not, will not solve the problem because:

- Without a commitment to on-going operating funds, new spaces will be no more affordable, stable or financially viable than existing child care programs. How will these new spaces be accessible to low and moderate income families? How will new programs provide fair and equitable remuneration for their staff? How will these programs cover programming and overhead costs?
- Without a plan to develop an infrastructure for child care services that can provide stable and effective management and administration, government will likely have difficulty finding operators for 10,000 new spaces. Community organizations are increasingly hesitant to take on child care services. Experiences show that child care services operate at a deficit and many organizations are unable to cover the gap. Parent managed child care services struggle to find the volunteer time and expertise required to provide consistent, effective management.

We have provided some detailed commentary on these two options because public statements made by Minister Sihota since the release of the Interim Report suggest that these two initiatives remain under serious consideration. However, a similar analysis of the other options in the Discussion Paper confirms our position that:

*The discussion paper sets out some first steps in addressing immediate problems of affordability, accessibility and low wages in the child care sector. While all of these options will make a difference for some families and caregivers, **they are only stop gap measures.** (Child Care Advocacy Forum Response to "Building A Better Future for B.C. Kids" - December, 1999)*

OUR CHALLENGE

We believe that the main message respondents have sent government is clear. The public is looking for fundamental change that moves child care from the current user fee system to one that, like education and health, is publicly funded.

In short - without a commitment to and a plan for such a publicly funded system, program closures like the tragic one at the YWCA 's Granny Y's centre will continue . Simply putting more money into each of the current, fragmented funding programs will not build a comprehensive, quality system that works. Short term actions are needed, but to be effective, these actions must be part and parcel of a multi year plan to build a viable system.

Therefore, the Child Care Advocacy Forum is issuing a challenge to Minister Sihota and his government. We call on them to:

Develop and implement a 5 year plan that moves child care from the current user fee system to one that is publicly funded. Any short term measures, must be clearly linked to this plan. No more fragmentation, no more bandaids!

This challenge is not new. It was clearly placed on the provincial government's agenda during last year's historic strike in the Community Social Services Sector. We believed that the decision to move responsibility for child care to Minister Sihota and MSDES last summer was a sign that government took this demand seriously. Since then, the members of the Child Care Advocacy Forum and the child care community at large have worked hard to fulfil our promise to 'roll up our sleeves' and work with the Minister and MSDES to achieve this goal. Together, we met Minister Sihota's challenge to us to show him and his government that British Columbians share our vision and agenda for child care services in B.C.

Regrettably, the Interim Report and recent comments made by the Minister indicate that, while this message has been sent by thousands of British Columbians, it has still not been heard.

We are however encouraged by positive statements made about child care by the candidates in the current NDP leadership race. And, when the winning candidate becomes our next Premier, we will be expecting immediate action because:

Our children can't wait!

AN URGENT MESSAGE FROM THE CHILD CARE ADVOCACY FORUM

Before, January 31, 2000
tell Minister Ramsey you want him to
SPEND MORE MONEY ON CHILD CARE

Over the last few months, thousands of British Columbians have told the provincial government that we expect action on child care now. We have told Minister Sihota that we need a significant increase in provincial spending on child care in the next provincial budget. **But, our work is not over yet.**

In November, 1999, B.C.'s Minister of Finance, Paul Ramsey, released a consultation paper about the next provincial budget - "BUDGET 2000: Choices and Challenges". Ramsey is asking for **input on how the government should manage our tax dollars.**

Our response to Minister Ramsey is simple and clear -
SPEND MORE MONEY ON CHILD CARE

Once again, time lines are tight and responses have to be in by January 31, 2000. Lets keep up the pressure and ensure that Minister Ramsey hears from the more than 75% of British Columbians who want the provincial and federal governments to give a high priority to public funding for quality child care services in their next budgets.

You can send the message in 3 easy ways:

1. **Phone** the Ministry of Finance's Toll Free Pre-Budget Consultation Line at **1-800-631-7897** and tell the operators you want the province to **spend more money on child care.**
2. **Respond on line**, at the Ministry of Finance web site at **www.fin.gov.bc.ca**. Select "Budget 2000: Choices and Challenges (pdf)" from the menu. At the end of the document, click on "Electronic Form". Once the Form is on your screen, find "Program Spending" and in the COMMENTS section type the message - **Spend more money on child care.**
3. **Sign** the attached Response Form, (it has our message "**Spend more money on child care**" already written in) and **FAX** it to Minister Ramsey at **(250) 356-2822**. (Make copies of the Form before you sign it - and pass it on to others)

**Share this message with colleagues, parents
and friends. Encourage them to
RESPOND TO RAMSEY!**

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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Coalition of Child
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of BC

Early Childhood
Educators of BC

School Aged Child
Care Association

Westcoast Child
Care Resource
Centre

Western Canada
Family Child Care
Association of BC

February, 2000

One Last Kick at the Can!

Dear friends and colleagues,

Over the last few months, thousands of us have told government that we expect action on child care NOW. Public consensus about the need for a **publicly funded child care system** that entitles all children to affordable, quality child care is strong and growing.

But, our work is not over yet. In February, 2 important events need our urgent attention:

- Paul Martin the Federal Minister of Finance will release the next **Federal Budget** in late February.
- Moe Sihota, the Provincial Minister of Social Development and Economic Security (MSDES) has **extended the deadline** for feedback to his Discussion Paper, "Building a Better Future for B.C.'s Kids", to February 29, 2000. He also released an "Interim Report on Responses to *Building a Better Future for British Columbia's Kids*" which gives some clues about possible provincial directions.

This means that there is still time to influence government decisions! So, we hope that this package will help us all **keep the pressure on for one more month.**

Here's what you can do:

1. **Contact Paul Martin and Your MP**
Tell them you expect a \$2 billion allocation in the next federal budget for child care and early childhood development services. You can reach Mr. Martin at: **Phone:** (613) 992-4284 **Fax:** (613) 992-4291 **E-Mail:** Martin.P@parl.gc.ca
If you haven't already written him, mail the attached letter. (No stamp needed)
2. **Respond to Moe Sihota's Interim Report**
The attached Advocacy Forum's Response to this Interim Report states our position that, while there is a high level of support for a publicly funded child care system, government continues to focus on 'stop gap' measures. Let Sihota know you agree. **FAX the attached letter to Sihota**, calling for a 5 year plan to move to a publicly funded child care system in B.C. (Just add your name and send it).
3. **Keep those letters and postcards coming**
To date, MSDES has received over 8000 responses to "Building A Better Future for B.C. Kids". Wow! But, we still need to **reach our goal of 10,000 responses.** So, use the attached "Postcards", developed by advocates in Terrace, for one last push. (Just copy, cut, distribute and mail. A stamp is required.)

We know how hard everyone has worked to get the message out. Together, we have made an impact. Now it's time to take it over the top. So, we trust that we will all find the time and energy to give it:

One Last Kick at the Can!

Thanks,

Rita Chudnovsky, for the Child Care Advocacy Forum

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March 8, 2000

Dear Minister,

The members of the Child Care Advocacy Forum wish to extend our congratulations to you on your recent appointment to Cabinet.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum is an alliance of 6 provincial child care organizations that brings together close to 4000 parents, child care providers and organizations. We and our partners are working for a publicly funded child care system that entitles all children access to quality early childhood services, regardless of the economic or employment status of their families. Over the last five months, thousands of British Columbians have told your government that they support our vision and expect action on child care now.

Child care also emerged as a pivotal issue during the recent leadership race and a number of commitments were made. Delegates at the recent NDP convention unanimously adopted the 7 point child care agenda of the Child Care Advocacy Forum and called on your government to "work with child care advocacy groups to develop legislation to achieve the objectives of the Child Care Agenda" (Resolution Q-2000-01). Premier Dosanjh is on record as supporting access to quality, affordable child care for all families and has spoken strongly about the need for federal and provincial action on child care since his election.

We know that you face many important issues and challenges - but we fully expect that you will give top priority to action on **child care**. We are therefore calling on you and your Cabinet colleagues to immediately:

- **Develop and implement a 5 year plan that moves child care from the current user fee system to one that is publicly funded.**
- **Make a significant new investment in child care in the upcoming provincial budget..**
- **Tell the Federal Government that B.C. is ready and willing to make child care a priority in the National Children's Agenda.**

As always, we look forward to a cooperative and constructive working relationship with you to ensure that the needs of children and families are met. We have been patient while your government resolved its leadership question, but we cannot accept any more delays because:

OUR CHILDREN CAN'T WAIT!

Darcelle Cottons, BC Association of Child Care Services
Susan Harney, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C.
Sheila Davidson, Early Childhood Educators of B.C.
Ruth Sullivan, School Age Child Care Association of B.C.
Sherrie Jamieson, Western Canada Family Child Care Association
Karen Norman, Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre

Child Care Advocacy Forum

WE KEPT OUR EYES ON THE 'PRIZE'

And - it worked!

Now, lets celebrate the victory.

What's the Prize?

On March 15, 2000 the Government of B.C., in its first Throne Speech since the election of Premier Ujjal Dosanjh, made a commitment to begin the development of a publicly funded child care system in B.C. **This is a HUGE VICTORY.**

After decades of hard work - OUR MESSAGE WAS HEARD. For the first time, a provincial government acknowledged the need for a publicly funded system that entitles all children and families to quality, affordable child care.

The Throne Speech was followed up by the provincial Budget on March 27. The Budget allocates 14 million new dollars to begin "implementation of a before-and-after child care program on school sites". While this is a modest financial commitment, it is a critical first step in building the child care system that we need! And, Minister Jan Pullinger (the Minister now responsible for child care) says, that over a 5 - 6 year period, the government will work with parents and child care providers to make publicly funded child care available for **all** children.

How did we win the Prize?

Government's actions are a direct response to the successful campaign we waged over the last year. 10,000 people responded to the Discussion Paper, "Building A Better Future for B.C. Kids" and the overwhelming majority of responses called for a publicly funded system for all children.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum wants to thank everyone who worked so hard to send government a clear and consistent message. Your individual efforts and **our collective ability to stay focused on the 'big picture' made the difference.**

Here's one way to think about the impact of our efforts. Government projects that, in this fiscal year, 10,000 children will have access to a school aged child care space that costs \$7 - \$8 a day (less for low income parents). So - 1 letter = 1 affordable space! **So, now it's time to celebrate the progress we've made!**

We know that there are many questions yet to be answered, and many 'implementation hurdles' to address. But, for a few minutes we encourage you to put these aside. Instead, take pride and pleasure in knowing that we now live in one of only two jurisdictions in North America where there is a commitment to build a comprehensive, publicly funded child care system.

We wish we could host and toast this achievement at a great big party. We can't, so we invite you to find your way to celebrate. Raise your coffee cups at break time; give yourselves a round of applause at your next parent or staff meeting; or indulge yourself with a special treat.

Most importantly, let everyone know that we have made a real difference for children and families in B.C.

CHILD CARE ADVOCACY FORUM

<p>B.C.'s New Child Care Initiative An Information Update April, 2000</p>
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What do we know about the new Child Care Initiative?

On March 15, 2000 the Provincial Government's Throne Speech included the following commitment:

In this session, my government will begin to build with parents and care providers a publicly-funded child care system. Our first step will be a new initiative to support safe, affordable before- and after-school care.

On March 27, 2000 the Provincial Budget committed, for the 2000/01 fiscal year:

\$14 million for implementation of a before-and-after-school child care program on school sites.

Other than press reports, no additional detailed information has been released.

On March 29, 2000 representatives of the Child Care Advocacy Forum met with Minister Jan Pullinger. We asked the Minister about the government's plans to date. The Minister confirmed a number of items that had been reported in the press. She also made it clear that she intends to work, in a collaborative process, with parents, child care providers and others on further implementation details.

Based on press reports and our discussion with the Minister, it is our understanding that:

- The initiative will begin with school-aged child care spaces for 6 - 12 year olds.
- There are currently 20,000 licensed school-aged child care spaces in B.C. for children aged 6 - 12. Of these, 10,000 are on school sites.
- The initiative will begin with 10,000 spaces on school sites.
- Parents using these spaces will pay \$7 or \$8 a day.
- Low income parents will pay less.
- The initiative will begin on Jan. 1, 2001 and the \$14 million in this year's provincial budget will cover the last quarter of this fiscal year
- (Jan.1 - March 31, 2001)
- Further plans will be developed through a collaborative implementation process.

What is the Child Care Advocacy Forum's Response to the Initiative?

The Child Care Advocacy Forum believes that the commitment in the Throne Speech and the plan to begin a before-and-after school child care program **are significant and important first steps**. They indicate that government listened to the thousands of British Columbians who told them that we need to move towards a publicly funded child care system that entitles all children access to quality, affordable child care.

We believe that these developments should be celebrated and encourage groups and individuals to communicate their support for these developments to government.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum's work will now focus on:

- Active involvement in the implementation of the first step of the Initiative. We will work to support a successful first step that can serve as a model for the further expansion of the child care program and will use our "Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care Services in B.C." as a starting place for our participation in the design and delivery of the first step.
- Development and implementation of a 5 year incremental plan that entitles all children access to publicly funded, quality services. We will continue to advocate for a plan that supports a broad range of programs and services that facilitate the growth and development of all children including full and part time programs for children from birth to 12 years of age; centre, family and in-home care; family resource and support programs and Child Care Resource and Referral programs.
- Advocating for a multi-year financial commitment that provides the resources required to implement the 5 year plan.
- Encouraging and supporting the provincial government in making child care a cornerstone of the National Children's Agenda and negotiating a cost-sharing agreement with the federal government.

We will continue to provide our members and partners with updates on developments as regularly as possible.

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This is one in a series of fact sheets outlining the importance of regulated child care to the people of BC. It was prepared by the Child Care Advocacy Forum, an alliance of six provincial child care organizations committed to developing a publicly funded, comprehensive child care system. If you would like to receive other fact sheets or for more information, please contact the Child Care Advocacy Forum.

May 2000

BC Works if Child Care Works

Child care makes important contributions to society. This fact sheet provides information about the positive impact of professionally delivered, regulated child care – with a range of options – to the economy and labour force.

Here are some of the reasons why BC works better if child care works well.

➤ **Publicly funded, comprehensive child care creates opportunities for parents to engage in paid work and/or study.**

Knowing that their children are well cared for by qualified staff in high quality programs, parents are confident in their decision to use child care services and are better able to advance in their chosen careers.

With parents now paying \$1.35 BILLION for BC's child care services and government paying \$188 million, child care remains unaffordable for many parents – despite subsidy programs which are only available to parents with very low or no income. Meeting child care needs should not require a choice for parents between quality care and career or training commitments.

➤ **Regulated child care programs employ skilled, educated professionals who are committed to caring for our society's children.**

Thousands of jobs across this province are held by trained child care workers and managers. A properly funded, comprehensive child care system would ensure that qualified individuals who chose to care for infants and children were able to work in their field of choice, and receive reasonable wages and benefits for their vital work.

➤ **Publicly funded, comprehensive child care services create benefits for all of us, whether or not we have children and whether or not we use the services.**

In their publication *The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care: A Policy Study* (1998), Cleveland and Krashinsky conclude that, if we offered child care to all Canadian children aged two to five, the immediate benefit to our economy would equal \$6,240,000. This includes greater employability for parents, higher income and taxes paid by parents, and savings to the social welfare system.

Down the road, there would be similar economic benefits projected for the children, because positive, nurturing environments in the first years of life are linked to academic and career success. In the long run, a comprehensive child care system would offer a \$2 return to children, parents and society for every dollar invested.

Of course, the bottom line for any child care system is that it works for the children it serves. If child care works well, children get the care and support they need to develop to their fullest potential. In future years, they will be able to help BC work to its fullest potential.

Child Care – The Place to Start

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May 2000

The Future Begins Today

Child care makes important contributions to society. This fact sheet outlines how high quality child care today can help build the best possible future.

- **In the first 6 years of life a child goes through the most critical periods for brain development. These periods help determine future capacity.**

As McCain and Mustard explain in *The Early Years Study* (1999), these years "set the base for competence and coping skills that will affect learning, behaviour and health throughout life...There are critical periods when a young child requires proper stimulation for the brain to establish the neural pathways...Many of these critical periods are over or waning by the time a child is 6 years old."

- **Unstimulating, unsupportive environments affect brain development, leading to negative health, socio-economic and emotional outcomes later in life.**

Dr. Clyde Hertzman explains it this way in his paper, "The Case for Child Development as a Determinant of Health":

Spending one's early years in an unstimulating, emotionally and physically unsupportive environment will...lead to cognitive and socioemotional delays... Because the central nervous system... 'talks to' the immune, hormone, and clotting systems, systematic differences in the experiences of life will increase or decrease the levels of resistance to disease. This will change the long-term function of vital organs of the body and lead to socioeconomic differences in morbidity and mortality.

- **High quality child care services help a child start grade 1 ready to learn and more likely to succeed – in school and in life.**

Gillian Doherty's *The Great Child Care Debate* (1996) reviews 21 international studies. While Doherty notes that programs must be staffed appropriately and adequately, she concludes that "child care may be beneficial, especially in the area of social and language skill development."

Some studies find that children who attend preschool programs score higher on tests and are less likely to repeat a grade than children who do not attend such programs. Some suggest that child care might even be linked to post-secondary education and future income.

High quality child care offers appropriate intellectual, social and emotional stimulation and teaching for children in the critical early years.

For a child who has developmental or other problems, intervention becomes harder and more expensive as a child ages. Qualified staff in a comprehensive child care system are key to early identification and intervention, and the provision of quality care so that ALL children have the brightest possible future.

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May 2000

From Common Sense to Public Dollars

Child care makes important contributions to society. This fact sheet explains why it makes good sense to develop a comprehensive child care system with a range of service options and fund it predominantly with public dollars.

- **Only a comprehensive child care system supported by public dollars can ensure that ALL British Columbian children and families have access to regulated child care.**

Currently, BC child care services are funded privately through parent fees (total: \$1.35 BILLION annually), with some government support for wages, low income parents, repairs to facilities and purchase of equipment (total: \$188 million).

Many parents cannot afford the fees for high quality, regulated child care programs. "Working poor" parents who are ineligible for child care subsidy but lack available income are particularly hard hit. Public funding would ensure equal access to quality services for all British Columbian children and families, and would stabilize child care organizations.

- **A publicly funded, comprehensive child care system would create benefits for all of us, whether or not we have children and whether or not we use the services.**

In their publication, *The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care* (1998), Cleveland and Krashinsky conclude that if we offered child care to all Canadian children aged two to five, the immediate benefit to our economy would equal \$6,240,000. This includes greater employability for parents, higher income earned and taxes paid by parents, and savings to the social welfare system.

The economic benefit projected for the children would equal \$4,308,000, based on improved chances for future academic and professional success.

For society, the benefits would appear in greater tax revenues and savings to the social welfare system. In the long run, a comprehensive child care system would offer a \$2 return to children, parents and society for every dollar invested.

- **Public support for a comprehensive child care system through funding, but not through tax cuts, makes sense.**

The argument that tax cuts would provide parents with financial relief ignores the fact that low income parents most in need would reap little if any benefit. Full-time child care typically costs more than \$5,000 per year, and often much more for children under age 3. For parents at any income level to offset the cost of child care, huge tax cuts would be needed!

Canada now has a federal surplus, and a clear understanding of child care's economic and developmental benefits. Common sense says that a cooperatively built children's agenda must recognize the role of high quality child care in creating efficiencies in the education and service sectors as children develop to their fullest potential. Public dollars will help make that happen.

Child Care – The Place to Start

*Excerpts from
Advocacy Forum's Implementation Plan for
B.C.'s Publicly Funded Child Care system
May, 2000*

Guiding Principles for Transition Period

The Advocacy Forum recognizes that there will be many challenges during the transition period from the old system to the new one. While we can anticipate some of the implementation issues, other issues will emerge during the process. In order to ensure a consistent approach to implementation, the Child Care Advocacy Forum has adopted the following Guiding Principles.

The following Principles should guide a 5-year implementation process

- **Entitlement for children and families** should drive implementation.
- Every step must **lead towards the long term vision**.
- Implementation should build on **existing strengths** in the system
- New policies and procedures should be as **simple** as possible.
- Appropriate levels of **accountability** should be built into the system.
- Implementation **cannot compromise** and should **enhance quality and inclusive practice**.
- Government must **commit the staffing and resources** necessary to effectively implement change.
- The **level of public funding** provided to support each child care space needs to take into account the **actual costs** of supporting quality and **regional differences**.
- Services in the 'publicly funded system' must **not be able to charge more than the provincially established parent fee**. (Others can choose to operate legally outside the system and establish their own fees)
- Child care services not yet included in the publicly funded system should **continue to access current provincial child care funding programs** during the transition period
- Government must regularly review and **test its planning assumptions**

The following Principles are particularly relevant to the implementation of Phase 1 (school-based, school aged child care spaces) and should be used to guide the use of the additional child care dollars provided in the 2000/01 provincial budget.

Phase 1 needs to be a **model** for the rest of the system.

- Implementation should **extend entitlement to children in existing spaces** before creating new spaces.
- **Extending entitlement** to all children should **take priority** over meeting other needs in the system.

- **All currently operating, licensed school-based, school-aged child care services** that are prepared to meet accountability requirements should be **invited to participate** in the publicly funded system.

In addition to these Guiding Principles, there are 2 key pieces of work that government needs to undertake to support successful implementation and ensure effective use of public funds:

1. Develop and communicate a **5 year incremental plan** with time lines, targets and adequate financial resources leading to a publicly funded child care system that entitles all children to access quality child care services.

NOTE: The development of this plan must begin immediately and cannot be postponed until after the implementation of Phase 1 for two reasons:

- *If Phase 1 is to be a 'model' for the rest of the system, then we need to know where we are headed.*
- *While inequities are inevitable during a Transition Period, families and service providers will be able to accept inequities more readily if they know that their turn will come.*

2. Develop and provide resources for community based **child care infrastructure** that:
 - supports rational planning and development
 - provides effective management and administration of child care services
 - supports movement of unregulated care into the regulated sector (through licensing and/or registration with a Child Care Resource and Referral Program [CCRR])
 - coordinates key child care related functions licensing, training, CCRRs, etc.

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Status of Women
Canada - BC/Yukon
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BC

United Way of the
Lower Mainland -
First Years First



first|years|first

September 16, 2000

Premier Ujjal Dosanjh
Parliament Buildings , Room 156, West Annex
PO Box 9041, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E1

FAX: (250) 387-0087

Dear Premier Dosanjh,

On behalf of the Child Care Advocacy Forum, I wish to express our congratulations and support for the consistent leadership you are providing on the child care agenda at the provincial and intergovernmental levels. It has been an historic week for child care and we are particularly encouraged that:

- on September 14, you announced that the first phase of B.C.'s new child care initiative will now include kindergarten children who are enrolled in licensed before and after school care. We have consistently advocated for this change since the new child care initiative was announced. Your government's willingness to include Kindergarten children within the \$14 a day parent fee, indicates that the community consultation process initiated by Minister Pullinger is working!
- on September 14, along with the Honourable Jane Stewart, you also confirmed B.C.'s commitment to spend new federal funds for Early Childhood Development Services on child care. We trust that your government will follow the advice provided by First Call on the distribution of these funds (2/3 for child care and 1/3 for family support/special services/pre and perinatal services). We were particularly pleased to hear you say that, along with many other Canadians, you are still committed to a national child care program. So are we, and we will continue to work to ensure this goal is achieved.

The Advocacy Forum commends the First Ministers for reaching an agreement on Early Childhood Development. After many years of inaction, the agreement is a significant first step. However, we are concerned that it falls short of making a commitment to a comprehensive system that entitles all children access to quality early childhood services. Under the current agreement, there is no guarantee that the limited funds available will be used to address child care needs. Your leadership in keeping child care front and centre sets a benchmark and will help make the case for comparable action across the country. Our job now is to ensure that B.C.'s initiative receives the political and financial support it needs to make it a model of success.

Sincerely,

Rita Chudnovsky, Facilitator
Child Care Advocacy Forum

cc. The Honourable Jan Pullinger

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First Years First



first years|first

September 2000

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We hope you had a good summer and took some time to relax and celebrate the important progress we achieved last Spring. We now live in one of two jurisdictions in North America where there is a commitment to build a comprehensive, publicly funded child care system! While this is a huge accomplishment, our work is far from over.

This Fall, the Child Care Advocacy Forum is asking you to join us on two important advocacy initiatives:

1. Sign On For Canada's Kids: Deadline December 2000

The goal of the cross Canada campaign is to ensure that the federal/provincial/territorial governments reach an agreement on an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Strategy by December 2000. While support for such an agreement is growing, the people of Canada need to let governments know that they must meet this deadline because all children are entitled to the best start in life.

A federal/provincial/territorial agreement will be the mechanism through which the federal government provides funds to the provinces to support a coordinated range of services for all young children including pre and post natal care; early childhood learning and child care; and parenting supports. Our provincial government is taking a very positive position on such an agreement, **and we need to do everything we can to ensure that federal dollars are available to support the implementation of our publicly funded child care system in B.C.**

Attached is a package of materials from the campaign to use in your community, including a **Petition** that is being signed across Canada. There is also a campaign website - **www.signonforcanadaskids.org** - where you can sign the petition, fax a decision-maker, add your organization's endorsement, get up dated information, and more.

We encourage you to make this campaign your advocacy priority. Here's how you can get involved:

- **Collect signatures on the Petition** - sign on-line and download/copy the petition and send it out through your networks
- **Endorse the campaign** - E-Mail your group's endorsement to info@signonforcanadaskids.org to add your organization to the list
- **Link the campaign website to your website** - go to the website and click "Link to your site" and follow the 3 simple steps
- **Write, fax, E-Mail or visit your provincial and federal representatives** to gain their support and commitment
- **Organize a local event** to spotlight the campaign and collect signatures.

2. Implementation of BC's publicly funded child care system

Government and community reps are working hard on the implementation of the first phase of B.C.'s new child care initiative. Starting in January 2001, parents will pay a maximum of \$7 a day for before-and-after school care in licensed child care centres and those approved centres will receive funding from the provincial government to cover the additional costs of providing care.

Representatives of each of the member organizations of the Child Care Advocacy Forum are participating in Minister Pullinger's Implementation Working Group. Our goal is to support successful implementation of the first phase in a way that reflects our "Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care Services in B.C." Once Phase 1 is up and running, we will turn our attention to the development of a concrete 5 year plan that extends the new initiative to all children and families in B.C.

The Fall will be a busy time, as parents learn about the program and school aged centres complete the application process. We may see renewed public and media interest in the initiative. It will be important for all of us to keep our eyes on the prize by focusing on the benefits of a publicly funded system as we move from political commitment to action.

Here are some of the ways that you can make a difference:

- **Keep up to date** on the details of the new initiative so you can provide accurate information to parents, the community and the media. Information is available on the Ministry's website - www.sdes.gov.bc.ca/programs/childcar.htm or you can call the toll free line at **1-800-663-7867** (365-6501 in Victoria).
- **Let your MLA know that you support the initiative** and that you expect them to take further action towards a comprehensive publicly funded child care system. (This will set the stage for our work on child care in the next provincial election).
- **Speak to community groups and the media** about the benefits of a publicly funded child care system in your community.

So, there's lots to do, but together, we are up to it! Please keep us informed about activities and issues in your community.

One last thing - the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C. is sponsoring an Advocacy Symposium on November 17 and 18. Information is included in this package. We hope that you will make plans to attend so that we can strengthen our growing movement.

Sincerely,

Rita Chudnovsky, Facilitator
Child Care Advocacy Forum

**CHILD CARE SECTOR AND LOW WAGE REDRESS
A BRIEF HISTORY**

The B.C. government's low wage redress strategy was introduced in 1994. Low wage redress dollars for child care workers were initially delivered through the Wage Supplement Initiative (WSI) and are now delivered through the Compensation Contribution Program (CCP). Currently, the wages of approximately 6000 child care employees in group child care programs across B.C. are enhanced through CCP.

The following 'brief history' provides information about child care and low wage redress. The story is complex, so here are some key events that are still relevant today.

From 1993 - 1997, child care is clearly included in government's low wage redress strategy for the public sector. Here are the facts....

- 1993 Acting on recommendations of the Korbin Commission, government:
- includes child care in the newly created Community Social Services Employers Association (CSSEA) and funds a community project to build the Child Care Membership Division of CSSEA.
 - establishes the Public Sector Employer's Council (PSEC) with responsibility for establishing low wage guidelines under the government's Monetary Management Framework (MMF). Child care, as part of CSSEA, falls within these mandates.
- 1993 Government informs child care programs that they will introduce the Wage Supplement Initiative (WSI) as the "first step towards addressing the low wages of child care staff."
- 1994 Government provides WSI to licensed group child care program to enhance wages and benefits of child care employees for the 1994/95 fiscal year. Government informs the child care community that guidelines for increasing wages will be established by PSEC in consultation with CSSEA.
- 1997 Government approves additional funding for WSI for 'equity adjustments effective July 1, 1996

So - why does this matter today?

Events up to 1997 are still important for two reasons. They show that, from the start:

- child care was included in the low wage redress for the public sector
- money for child care wages came from a separate pot (MMF), set up to improve low wages across the public sector, not from the child care program budgets.

From 1998 on, the trends begin to change. Here are the facts...

- 1998 To simplify administration, WSI and Infant/Toddler Grants to child care centres are merged into the Compensation Contribution Program (CCP).

The CCP budget is increased by \$1.5 million to bring in all child care centres on CCP waitlist. *This was the last increase to the CCP budget and a new waitlists begins to develop.*

1998 CSSEA begins 'big table' bargaining on behalf of member in 4 unions (BCGEU, CUPE, HSA and HEU) who represent workers in the Community Social Services Sector. 18 child care employers, whose staff are in the BCGEU, participate in these negotiations.

Parties at the table expect that increases to wages and benefits for child care staff will continue to fall under PSEC's low wage guidelines, which cover both union and non-union staff, and will continue to come from the MMF, not from the existing child care program budgets.

Late in 1998, government begins to isolate child care from the overall low wage redress strategy. They see CCP as a program of the Ministry for Children and Families, not part of the low wage package funded through MMF. They assert that the \$1.5 million increase to CCP earlier in 1998 was MCF money and represents child care's share of low wage redress.

So, why does this matter today?

While government says that their policy hasn't changed, the ground is shifting. The specific funding mechanism designed to deliver wage supplements to child care is now considered to be part of the child care program budget. Fair and equitable access for child care to low wage redress dollars is in jeopardy.

In the spring of 1999, child care staff from 18 child care programs and other community social services sector workers go on strike. Here are the facts...

1999 In the Spring, 'big table' bargaining comes to an impasse. A full scale strike is called and 18 child care programs are closed for 12 weeks. The impact of the strike for child care receives considerable media attention.

Government says that low wage redress dollars for child care will not be addressed through this collective bargaining position however the unions won't settle without fair and equitable treatment for their child care members.

In May, a mediated agreement, "The Munroe Settlement" ends the strike. Unionized workers from the rest of the community social services sector who were part of the 'big table bargaining' receive substantial wage and benefit increases. The Munroe Accord provides for separate but comparable agreements covering the current employees of 22 child care agencies for a 5 year period.

In February, Treasury Board approves the recommendations of PSEC to provide wage and benefit increases totalling 15% to all provincially-funded, non-union workers providing contracted community social services except for child care workers. CSSEA, PSEC and the funding ministries agree to explore the complexities of wage/benefit increases for child care workers.

Throughout this period, the Child Care Advocacy Forum calls for **fair and equitable treatment for the child care sector.**

So why does this matter today?

In the face of united community and union action, unionized child care agencies that were part of joint negotiations are included in the benefits of the Munroe Settlement. This is an important victory. But, the rest of the child care sector is left behind. Child care low wage redress now comes out of Ministerial program funds - not the separate fund set aside for this purpose. Inequities within and between child care programs and between child care and the rest of the community social services sector are aggravated.

By Spring, 2000, the provincial government makes a commitment to a comprehensive, publicly funded child care system in B.C. Here are the facts...

- 1999 In the Fall, the provincial government begins a public consultation on child care. The Child Care Advocacy Forum focuses on mobilizing a broad public response. Over 10,000 British Columbians respond - the vast majority calling for a publicly funded, comprehensive child care system.

- 2000 In March, the government makes a commitment to implement a publicly funded child care system over the next 5 years, beginning with before and after school care in group programs for a parent fee of \$7 a day.

 In October, the government extends the CCP program to school-aged programs currently on the wait list who join the new initiative.

So why does this matter today?

The decision to extend CCP to all school-aged programs in the new initiative is a good one. But, it is only an interim measure and does not replace the need for fair and equitable treatment for the whole child care sector. The bill is still unpaid!

<p style="text-align: center;">THE CHILD CARE SECTOR AND LOW WAGE REDRESS The bill is still unpaid!</p>

In 1994, the government of B.C. introduced a low wage redress strategy for staff in the community social services. The child care sector was included in this initiative. Initially, low wage redress dollars were delivered to the child care sector through the Wage Supplement Initiative (WSI). Since 1998, low wage redress dollars have been delivered to the child care sector through the Compensation Contribution Program (CCP), which now provides over \$20 million to enhance the wages of approximately 6000 child care employees in licensed group centres across the province.

The recent study "You Bet I Care", on the quality of child care in Canada, confirms that adequate wages are a key predictor of quality. The study also found that B.C. has the highest quality of care in the country. We believe there is a connection between the quality of care in B.C. and the low wage redress program. This connection highlights the importance of an on-going commitment to raising the wages in our sector.

Regrettably, over the last two years, low wage redress for the child care sector has not kept pace with the rest of the community social services sector. Specifically:

- There has been no increase to the CCP budget since 1998. As a result, there is a growing wait list of child care programs who currently receive no CCP funds. Staff who do receive CCP have had no increases and any of their coworkers who have been hired as a result of expansions in these programs since 1998 are not covered.
- Most child care workers will not receive any of the benefits of recent agreements between government and the rest of the community social services sector. Unionized workers in the rest of the sector are receiving wage and benefit increases through the Munroe Accord signed in May, 1999. (Twenty-two child care agencies, who were part of these negotiations, will benefit from this agreement for the next 5 years) In February, 2000 Treasury Board agreed to extend comparable wage and benefit increases to all non-unionized workers in the contracted community social services sector, **except for child care**. For the rest of the sector, these agreements provide three increases in wages and benefits by October, 2000.

The growing inequities within and between child care programs and between the child care sector and the rest of the community social services sector are not acceptable!

There is some good news! The Child Care Advocacy Forum applauds the provincial government's recent decision to extend the CCP program to all eligible school-aged programs who wish to participate in the new publicly funded child care initiative. This decision is key to the success of the first phase of our new system but, at best it is only an interim measure that does not address the fundamental problem.

As a result of this situation, the Child Care Advocacy Forum is reactivating our campaign to ensure that **the child care sector receives fair and equitable access, with the rest of the community social services sector, to low wage redress dollars**

We call on the provincial government to:

- publicly reaffirm its commitment to include child care in its overall low wage redress strategy
- immediately allocate an equitable share of low wage redress dollars to the child care sector, to address the wait list and to provide child care workers with the same wage and benefit increases as those enjoyed by the rest of the sector
- integrate the low wage redress strategy for the child care sector into its promised 5 year implementation plan for a publicly funded child care system in B.C.

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United Way of the Lower
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Focus on the Federal Election November, 2000

On Nov. 27, Canadians go to the Polls to elect a new Federal Government. The Child Care Advocacy Forum hopes you will join us in sending a strong message to all candidates, from all parties, in every riding in B.C. that **we expect federal leadership and funding for a 'real' child care system in Canada.**

In this Federal Election, **our 3 key messages** are:

- **child care is the cornerstone** of a comprehensive set of early childhood development services that children and families need
- **we need a significant increase in the federal financial contribution to child care** - beginning with an initial commitment of \$2 billion in the next fiscal year.
- government needs to develop clear **implementation plans, with targets and timelines**, for the development of child care and related services across Canada.

While our messages need to be consistent, our work needs to be local.

The Advocacy Forum is working to develop and share tools and resources that you can use in your community. In this package, you will find:

- Ideas for **"What You Can Do"** to raise the profile of child care during the election
- A Flyer about the **Advocacy Forum's Candidates Meeting** on Tues., Nov. 14, 7:00 pm, 2131 Renfrew St., Vancouver. Come and bring others with you!
- **Election Materials** that you can copy, distribute and use during the campaign
- **Sign on For Canada's Kids Website** (www.signonforcanadaskids.org) where you will find more election information and materials.
- Information about how to **contact the Candidates** in your riding

**REMEMBER - last year we kept our 'eyes on the prize' and it worked.
We CAN do it again!**

***Child Care
Advocacy
Forum***

***Focus on the Federal Election
Important Background Information***

Our work in this federal election campaign needs to respond to 3 developments:

1. **First Ministers' Agreement on Early Childhood Development Services**

In September 2000, the Federal/Provincial/Territorial First Ministers reached an Agreement on Early Childhood Development Services. While this agreement represented a first step - it falls short in two significant ways:

First, the promised Federal contribution of \$2 billion over 5 years is **not enough to make a real difference**. Under the current agreement, only \$300 million will be transferred to provinces and territories in 2001/02. We know that this will not begin to address the need for affordable, quality child care.

Secondly, the agreement **does not make child care a cornerstone of early childhood development services**. While provincial and territorial government may choose to use the federal funds for child care, they are not required to do. And, there are no clear action plans with timelines and targets for the development of child care and related services. **So, the child care crisis continues.**

2. **The Federal Surplus**

There is now a considerable federal surplus. During this election, the debate will be about how we use the surplus. Many are putting forward tax cuts, as opposed to social investment, as the answer. **But, tax cuts are not a substitute for a comprehensive child care system!**

3. **B.C. Takes Leadership on Child Care**

The government of B.C. has made a commitment to develop and implement a comprehensive, publicly funded child care system, beginning with \$7 a day before and after school care in January, 2001. B.C. has also taken leadership at the federal/ provincial/territorial tables to move the early childhood development agenda forward. And, B.C. is the only province that has said it will use federal funds it under the Early Childhood Development Services Agreement for child care. These steps are to be applauded but we still need federal action. **We need all federal candidates to make a commitment that, if elected, they will work with our provincial government on B.C.'s child care initiative.**

***Child Care
Advocacy
Forum***

Federal Election Materials

Our goal in the Federal Election Campaign is to raise the profile of child care and to ensure that every newly elected MP is committed to advancing the child care agenda.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum and the Sign On For Canada's Kids Campaign are developing actions and tools that you can use. We are using the Sign On Campaign Website to share these ideas.

So, log onto **www.signonforcanadaskids.org** to find:

1. **Election Brochure** - An easy to use Brochure about child care in the Federal Election. It includes 3 questions to ask Candidates at public meetings. Last year we had an impact on the NDP leadership race because advocates raised child care at every leadership debate. Lets do it again.
2. **A Candidates' Commitment** - A statement for all candidates to sign, demonstrating their commitment to our 3 key messages. Make sure that every candidate in your riding signs and returns the Commitment.
3. **A Constituents' Letter** - A form letter for voters to send their federal candidates. Last year our strong letter writing campaign made a difference. Lets do it again. Ask everyone you know to send this letter to ALL of the candidates in their riding.
4. **Background Information** - A summary of each Party's position on child care and a Child Care Issue Sheet developed for the Women's World March last month.
5. **Links to Other Election Information and Campaigns** - Easy links to information about the election and related election advocacy campaigns.

Download, copy, distribute and use these election tools!

Child Care

Advocacy Forum

What You Can Do In The Federal Election

Last year the child care community in B.C. showed that when we all speak up, we can make a difference. Lets do it again in the Federal Election.

Here's some things that you can do:

- **Attend All Candidate Meetings** in your riding and ask questions about child care. (See our Election Brochure for some questions to ask).
- Ask parents, coworkers, neighbours and others to **sign the Constituent's Letter** to Candidates. Make it easy for them by mailing the signed letters as a package. (Its is in this package and on the website - www.signonforcanadaskids.org)
- **Phone or visit your federal candidates** to ask where they stand on child care. Tell them you are pinning your vote on child care. Ask them to sign and return the Candidates Commitment. (It's on the website www.signonforcanadaskids.org)
- **Plan an event** during the week of Nov. 14 - 20 to raise the profile of child care in your riding. If you live in the Lower Mainland, attend the Forum's Candidates Meeting on: **Tuesday, November 14, 2000**
7:00 - 9:00 pm
Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
2131 Renfrew Street, Vancouver (5th and Renfrew)
- **Write letters** to your local press, highlighting the importance of child care in the election.
- Participate in **radio call-in shows** about the election.
- Keep checking the website www.signonforcanadaskids.org for new developments and materials.

Remember, even if you have only 15 minutes to give - you can phone a candidate, sign and mail our Constituent's Letter or raise child care with a Candidate who comes to your door. Let them know you are pinning your vote on child care.

Together - we can make a difference!

Candidate for Member of Parliament
My Federal Riding
Canada

November, 2000

Dear Candidate,

I need you to know that Child Care is a vital issue for me in the upcoming federal election.

How I vote on November 27th will depend on which candidate pledges to take my message to Ottawa:

- There must be a national child care plan NOW - we have the money, let's invest it in our children.
- Child care must be high quality, affordable, publicly funded, accessible and accountable.
- Tax cuts do not create any new child care spaces for children.

As a candidate for my Member of Parliament you should know that:

- Over 70% of Canadian women with young children are in the labour force.
- There are 5 million children aged 0-12 in Canada, but we have regulated child care spaces for less than 500,000 of them.
- Research proves that for every dollar we invest in stimulating and nurturing care for children in their early years, there is at least a two dollar return in later years.

If elected, I urge you to the make Child Care a priority in Ottawa.

Please let me know where you stand on this issue.

Name (signature) _____ (print) _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____ FAX _____

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Care
Advocates of BC

Early Childhood
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School Age Child
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Westcoast Child
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Western Canada
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Association of BC

Funding and Support provided by:

Status of Women
Canada - BC/Yukon
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BC

United Way of the
Lower Mainland -
First Years First



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CHILD CARE B.C. IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO SO... LET'S DO IT NOW! January, 2001

On January 8, 2001 Premier Ujjal Dosanjh and Minister Mike Farnworth unveiled their plans for making all licensed child care in B.C. affordable for parents. Building on the school-aged child care initiative that began this month, the government announced that parents whose children attend licensed group and family child care will pay no more than \$14 a day for all-day care.

As of Jan. 1, 2001, families of children from kindergarten to age 12 are now paying no more than \$7 a day for before and after school care and no more than \$14 a day for kindercare and full-day care for older children when school is not in session. Thousands of families are saving up to \$1,100 a year. Low income families, who still receive a subsidy to help cover the reduced daily fee are now able to choose quality child care at no or minimal costs. Early reports are that many families are enrolling their children in quality, safe programs because, for the first time, they can afford it.

It is not only families of children using child care who benefit from the Child Care B.C. A growing body of research clearly demonstrates that public investment in the early years benefits everyone. Children who receive good care in their early years do better at school, are less likely to engage in risky behaviours, and are more likely to be gainfully employed when they grow up. Canadian economists calculate that for every \$1 we invest in quality child care, there is a \$2 saving down the road.

We applaud the government's commitment to extend Child Care B.C. to include all children, in the full range of child care and pre-school programs. It is THE RIGHT THING TO DO for children, families, and communities. It responds to thousands of British Columbians who told government that child care must be a top priority for immediate action.

And, there's the rub. The next phase of Child Care B.C. - infant and toddler care and school-aged care in family child care - will not begin until January, 2002. This timeline has led the media and Official Opposition to dismiss Child Care B.C. as just another pre-election promise. But our concern is not about politics - it is about children, families and the stability of child care programs in B.C.

We are therefore calling on:

- **Premier Dosanjh to implement the next phase of Child Care B.C. effective April 1, 2001.**
- **The Official Opposition to lend their support to the timely implementation of Child Care B.C.**

There is no excuse for delays. Infant and toddler care in this province is in crisis. Parents cannot afford the exorbitant costs (\$800- \$1000 a month) and infant-toddler programs cannot survive for another year without public funds. As we have said before - our children can't wait.

Premier Ujjal Dosanjh
Parliament Buildings , Room 156, West Annex
PO Box 9041, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E1

FAX: (250) 387-0087

Dear Premier Dosanjh,

I applaud your government's announcement that Child Care B.C. will be extended to include all children in the full range of child care and pre-school programs. It is THE RIGHT THING TO DO for children, families, and communities.

However, I am very concerned that the next phase of Child Care B.C. - infant and toddler care and school-aged care in family child care - will not begin until January, 2002. Thousands of British Columbians told your government that **child care must be a top priority for immediate action**. There is no excuse for delay. As we have said before - our children can't wait.

I call on you to implement the next phase of Child Care B.C. effective April 1, 2001.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

(Print name and address)

----- □ -----

Gordon Campbell, Leader of the Opposition
Room 201, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

FAX: (250) 387-2550

Dear Mr. Campbell,

As you know, a growing body of research clearly demonstrates that public investment in children's early years benefits everyone. Today, thousands of British Columbians agree that child care must be a top priority for immediate action.

I support plans to extend Child Care B.C. to include all children in the full range of child care and pre-school programs. There is no excuse for delay and the next phase of this program should begin on April 1, 2001. This is THE RIGHT THING TO DO for children, families, and communities.

When you were the Mayor of Vancouver, you took leadership on child care. **I am now calling on you to support the timely implementation of a comprehensive child care program that meets the needs of all children.** As we have said before - our children can't wait.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

(Print name and address)

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Westcoast Child Care
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Coalition of Child Care
Advocates of BC

United Way of the
Lower Mainland - First
Years First

For immediate release

January 31, 2001

BC Families and Kids Need Comprehensive Child Care Program Now!

On January 8th, 2001, Premier Ujjal Dosanjh and Minister Mike Farnworth unveiled plans to make licensed child care affordable for BC parents. Building on its school age child care initiative that began earlier this month, Government announced that parents whose children attend licensed group and family child care will pay no more than \$14 per day for all-day care by 2004.

According to Susan Harney who chairs the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, "We applaud the Government's commitment to children of all ages in a range of child care and preschool programs. Research and our own experiences tell us that this is the right thing to do for children, families and communities. Over the past eighteen months, British Columbians have clearly indicated that child care must be a top priority for action. This plan responds to the thousands of parents, caregivers and concerns citizens who sent that message to Government."

A growing body of research demonstrates that public investment in the early years, including child care services, benefits everyone. Children who receive good care in their early years do better at school, are less likely to engage in risky behaviours, and are more likely to be employed as adults. Canadian economists have calculated that, for every \$1 invested in quality comprehensive child care services, there is a \$2 return down the road.

Dianne Liscumb, Executive Director of Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre, commented, "We know that public investment in a comprehensive child care system makes good sense. And we know that British Columbians are willing to support that investment. But, there is the rub, phase two of the Child Care BC plan will not begin for another full year."

Phase two of the Child Care BC initiative covers infant and toddler care, and school age care in licensed family child care facilities. Its implementation is scheduled for January 2002. Infant and toddler care is generally considered to be at a crisis stage for both service providers and parents, with fees reaching \$800-\$1,000 per month.

In response to the Government's recent announcement, the Child Care Advocacy Forum is calling on:

1. Premier Dosanjh to move up the implementation of the next phase of Child Care BC to April 1st, 2001;
2. The Official Opposition to lend its support to the timely implementation of a comprehensive publicly funded child care system that meets the needs of all BC children.

Ms Harney added, "There is no excuse for delay. Many infant-toddler programs will not survive another year without public funding. As we have said before – our children can't wait!"

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Feb. 28, 2001

Premier Ujjal Dosanjh
Parliament Buildings , Room 156, West Annex
PO Box 9041, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E1

FAX: (250) 387-0087

Dear Premier Dosanjh,

The Child Care Advocacy Forum applauds your recent announcement to extend Child Care B.C. to include all children in the full range of child care and pre school programs. We are convinced that Child Care B.C. is THE RIGHT THING TO DO for children and families and are active supporters of this initiative in the community.

However, as the attached position outlines, we are very concerned about the proposed start date for extending Child Care B.C. beyond the current before and after school-care initiative. As you know from the correspondence you are receiving, our constituency is calling on you **to implement the next phase of Child Care B.C., effective April 1, 2001** and to allocate sufficient funds to cover a full year of funding for infant-toddler group centres and school-aged children in licensed family child care in the next provincial budget.

Our reasons for recommending an April 1 start date are based on our commitment to ensuring that the needs of children and families are met. This recommendations builds on the voices of over 10,000 British Columbians who told your government that child care must be a top priority for immediate action.

We had hoped that you would use your recent televised address to respond to our call for an April 1 start date. We are now looking forward to seeing this commitment reflected in the upcoming Budget. While we are pleased that you highlighted the new before and after school care program as an achievement of your government during your address, we regret that did not take this opportunity to let British Columbians know about your four year plan for building a comprehensive child care system.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these important issue with you and look forward to your speedy response. You can contact us at the numbers above.

Sincerely,

Rita Chudnovsky - Facilitator

cc. The Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Social Development and Economic Security

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CHILD CARE B.C. IS THE LAW!

April, 2001

Dear friends and colleagues,

A few weeks ago, we sent you a Provincial Election Child Care Package, with information and materials that you can use in your community to advocate for child care in the upcoming provincial election. **We trust that you are already using these materials and planning your local activities, as we wait for the election to be called.**

Since we developed the package, there has been another important and historic development. On March 29, the government of B.C. proclaimed a new law - **the Child Care BC Act - Bill 2, 2001**. This Bill legislates the 4 year plan for Child Care BC, first announced in January, 2001. Under this legislation, all licensed group and family child care services and pre-schools for children from infancy through to 12 years of age will be brought into the publicly funded child care system by 2004. Families will pay no more than \$14 a day for full day care and \$7 a day for before and after school care.

The full text of Bill 2 is available on line www.legis.gov.bc.ca, but the attached info sheet outlines some of the highlights and implications of the legislation. We can expect that the child care debate during the election will now focus on the legislation, so we have included the position of the major political parties on Bill 2 and another important question for you to ask your candidates during the campaign.

A group of a dozen advocates, including members of Parents for Child Care and each of the member organizations of the Child Care Advocacy Forum, were in the Legislature for the First Reading of the Bill. The hard work of child care advocates over the last 20 years was acknowledged by Minister Farnworth when he introduced the legislation and by a number of MLAs who spoke in favour of the legislation. Those who attended this event, saw history in the making. They know that they share the appreciation reflected in the legislature with thousands of advocates across the province. Together, we have made a huge difference!

Please add the attached sheet to your election package and distribute it widely in your community.

You can download the Provincial Election Child Care Package from the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada's website (www.childcareadvocacy.ca) or by contacting us at the numbers above.

Lets make sure that the progress we have achieved continues long after the coming election!



Child Care BC is now the law!

On March 29, 2001, the Government of BC proclaimed Bill 2 – the Child Care BC Act. The information below explains what this means for families, service providers and communities, and where the main political parties stand on this new legislation.

What does Bill 2 say?

Bill 2 outlines the Child Care BC Act, which covers all aspects of the Child Care BC Plan first announced in January 2001. This includes the school aged child care Funding Assistance Program launched in January 2001, as well as funding for family child care and other centre-based child care programs scheduled to begin in January 2002. The bill also creates the BC Benefits (Child Care Subsidy) Act to deal with child care subsidies. Bill 2 includes a schedule of required funding for each year, beginning with \$127 million in 2001/2002 and ending with \$480 million in 2004/05. The full text of the bill is available on-line at <http://www.legis.gov.bc.ca/> and we have provided some highlights of the bill at the end of this information sheet.

What does the legislation mean?

This legislation means that Child Care BC is now the law in our province. If a future government decides not to move forward on Child Care BC, it will have to **repeal or amend the legislation**.

Where do the main political parties stand on Bill 2?

The NDP Government introduced this legislation and voted for it. Bill 2 passed and became law on March 29, 2001. We expect that the NDP will continue to support this initiative and new legislation during the provincial election campaign.

The Liberal Opposition voted against Section 4(b) through (f) (see over for details), although they supported other parts of Bill 2. The Liberals say that they will maintain the aspects of Child Care BC already in place (i.e., school aged and kindercare in licensed group programs), but are not committed to implementing the rest of the four-year plan outlined in the Bill.

What does the Child Care Advocacy Forum think about Bill 2 and the Child Care BC Act?

We believe that Bill 2 is a significant and historic development. For the first time, children and families in BC have a legislative entitlement to affordable, licensed child care. We support this legislation and will work hard during and after the provincial election campaign to ensure that it is honoured and strengthened. We know that the Child Care BC Act does not answer all of the needs of the child care system. There is still much work to do to ensure that:

- ✓ a comprehensive range of our services is available,
- ✓ services are of the highest possible quality,
- ✓ caregivers are adequately paid for their work,
- ✓ training options are available, and
- ✓ we have a strong administrative infrastructure for child care.

What can you do about Bill 2?

We expect that the debate on child care in the provincial election campaign will now focus on whether or not candidates support the Child Care BC Act. The material in the Child Care Advocacy Forum's

Provincial Election Child Care Package is still very relevant. The Talking Points in that package cover the major criticisms of Bill 2 and Child Care BC that you can expect to hear.

But, it is important that you ask all of your candidates where they stand on Bill 2 – so here is one more introductory comment and some additional questions to add to your list.

On March 29, 2001, the Child Care BC Act was proclaimed. This Act enshrines a four-year plan to make publicly funded child care available to families at a maximum cost of \$14 a day for full-time care and outlines a timeline for bringing all licensed group and family programs into the system.



If elected, will you support full implementation of Bill 2 – the Child Care BC Act? If not, why not? How will you ensure affordable, quality child care services for all families and children?

Highlights of Bill 2 – the Child Care BC Act

Section 2:

Enshrines the Provincial Child Care Council as the body that will advise the Minister responsible for the Child Care BC Act and the BC Benefits (Child Care Subsidy) Act.

Section 3:

Enshrines the Funding Assistance Program and requires that, for each fiscal year, Government set the funding to be allocated to that Program. It also enshrines affordability of child care by stating that:

The maximum fees that a child care provider may require a parent to pay to the child care provider are the sum of the basic parent fee...up to a maximum of \$14 per day per child, and the additional permitted fees for specified services and expenses as set out in a written agreement between the minister and the child care provider.

Section 4:

Outlines a timeline for extending public funding to 85,000 child care spaces in programs licensed under the Community Care Facilities Act as follows:

- (a) On this Act coming into force, up to 21,000 spaces for children enrolled during the school year in an out of school (licensed) group program...*
- (b) Effective January 2, 2002, for (i) up to 7,000 spaces for kindergarten and school age children enrolled during the school year in a family child care program... and (ii) up to 4,680 spaces for children under age 36 months enrolled in a group day care under 36 months program...*
- (c) Effective on September 3, 2002, for up to 17,000 spaces for children up to school age enrolled in a family child care program...*
- (d) Effective on July 2, 2003, for up to the total number of spaces referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b), (i) for children enrolled, during school summer break periods, in a (licensed) group or family out of school child care program...*
- (e) Effective on September 1, 2003, for up to 16,560 spaces for children, (i) age 30 months and up, and (ii) who have not yet entered grade 1 enrolled in a group day care 30 months to school age program...*
- (f) Effective on January 4, 2004, for up to 18,720 spaces for children enrolled in a preschool 30 months to school age program...*

This material was prepared by the Child Care Advocacy Forum in April 2001. The Child Care Advocacy Forum is an alliance of six provincial child care organizations: BC Association of Child Care Services, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, Early Childhood Educators of BC, School Age Child Care Association, Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre and Western Canada Family Child Care Association of BC.

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Status of Women
Canada - BC/Yukon
Region through
Coalition of Child Care
Advocates of BC

United Way of the
Lower Mainland - First
Years First



first | years | first



Provincial Election 2001

Child Care Days of Action
May 7 & May 8, 2001

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Well, the provincial election is off and running, but child care is not yet receiving the attention it deserves. We all need to take **ACTION** to ensure that every candidate understands the importance of child care for their constituents.

The Advocacy Forum is declaring **May 7** and **May 8** provincial **Child Care Days of Action**. **Use these days to raise the profile of child care in your community.**

Here are some suggestions:

- **Visit local candidate's Campaign Offices.** Take a small group, make some I VOTE CHILD CARE signs and let the media know your plans. At campaign offices, ask the candidate to sign our Candidate's Commitment (attached).
- **Walk around the Block for Child Care.** This is a great event to do with children. Take signs, sing songs. Do it at the end of the day so that parents can join in. Let the media know ahead of time - it will be a great visual.
- **Invite candidates to make a 'child care stop' at your program** during their campaign. They will bring the media. Be ready to talk about child care needs in your community. Ask candidates to sign the Candidates' Commitment.
- **Blitz candidates with Letters from Voters.** Collect signatures on the Letter from a Voter (attached). By now, we are all experts at this! Deliver them by hand or FAX them en masse to candidates on May 7 & 8.
- **Organize a phone blitz to candidate's campaign offices.** Imagine the impact of tens of calls asking candidates about their position on child care.
- **Attend election events in your riding.** Take a child care contingent to local election events in your riding on May 7 & 8. Make signs, be visible!
- **Order and distribute our I VOTE CHILD CARE buttons** (order form attached)
- At very least, send a press release to the local media about the importance of child care in your community.

For party platforms and candidate contact information and political parties' websites -
www.bcliberals.com www.bc.ndp.ca www.greenparty.bc.ca

Remember - May is Child Care Month and it couldn't come at a more important time. Let's make sure that every person who is elected to the Legislature is committed to moving forward on child care!

CANDIDATE'S COMMITMENT

Dear Candidate

As British Columbians prepare to elect a new government, the question of how you intend to meet the child care needs of children and families in B.C. is of concern to many voters. Recent developments highlight the importance of this issue.

- Over 10,000 British Columbians told government that urgent action on child care must be a top priority. In response, the province has taken the first steps towards a comprehensive, publicly funded child care system for B.C.
- The federal/provincial/territorial governments reached an agreement on Early Childhood Development Services. Under this agreement, B.C. will receive federal funds to support child care and other family supports.

We are asking you, as an aspiring MLA, to show your support for B.C. children and families by signing on to three commitments that will ensure the progress achieved to date continues.

If elected, I will work for a child care system that:

- YES _____ 1. entitles ALL children access to quality early childhood experiences and programs
- YES _____ 2. offers families choices from a range of quality, affordable child care and other family supports
- YES _____ 3. moves away from a user-fee system to a publicly funded one

Further comments:

Candidate's Name _____

Party Affiliation _____ Riding _____

Signature _____

Please **FAX** your response to:
Child Care Advocacy Forum
(604) 709-5662



Child Care Advocacy Forum
Provincial Election 2001

In a few weeks, British Columbians will go to the polls to elect a new provincial government. This election will be a critical one for child care and the stakes are high.

In past elections, our goal has been to raise the profile of child care. This time CHILD CARE IS CLEARLY ON THE AGENDA and our goal is to make sure that, no matter who forms government, **BC continues to build a comprehensive, publicly funded child care system that entitles ALL children access to quality early childhood experiences and programs.**

We need to make sure that every candidate running for election makes a commitment to work for a child care system in B.C. that:

- entitles ALL children access to quality early childhood experiences and programs
- offers families choices from a range of quality child care and other family supports
- moves away from a user-fee system to a publicly funded one

To be successful, we need to make the size and strength of the constituency that will **VOTE CHILD CARE** visible. And to do this, we need your help! We have developed an election package that you can use in your community.

Please copy and distribute these materials widely. Use them, change them, make them your own. Remember - over the last year we have made a real difference and we can do it now.

STRATEGIES

While all candidates will be asked to make a commitment to the 3 messages above, in the current context, we may need different strategies for different parties/candidates.

1. Strategy with the Liberals

Our strategy with the Liberals (and other opposition parties) should be to secure as solid a commitment as possible to a child care position and program that is consistent with our 3 key messages. We will need to:

- ensure they hear from families served by the first phase of the program and from those who want to know 'when its their turn' so they appreciate the level of support for this program and the consequences of cutting it.
- press them for specifics on what they will do, how much money they will commit and whether they will cut, maintain or increase the school-aged child care initiative.
- develop responses to the concerns/issues they are raising (eg. targeting, a made in B.C. system, more study/discussion, all-day Kindergarten, tax cuts, etc.)
- appeal to those within the Liberal party who have supported progressive child care policy in the past.

2. Strategy with the NDP

Our strategy with the NDP should be to indicate our support for Child Care B.C. while pressing them to strengthen and improve it by:

- speeding up the implementation of Child Care B.C.
- including registered LNRs and extended family caregivers in the program
- addressing the remaining 'unpaid low wage redress bill' in the child care sector

PRE-ELECTION ACTIVITIES

- Lobby the Premier to implement the next phase of Child Care B.C. (School-aged spaces in licensed Family Child Care and Infant-Toddler Group Centres) effective April 1, 2001.
- Ensure the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition hear directly from parents served by the school-aged program about how important it is for them and from parents who are not yet served but want the program extended to cover them.
- Meetings with Liberal MLAs at the constituency and provincial levels to ensure they understand that child care is an issue and to secure commitments.
- Possible appearance on Open-line shows
- Preparation of election materials including:
 - I VOTE CHILD CARE Buttons
 - Candidates' Commitment (modelled on one used in the federal election)
 - Constituents' Letter to Candidates (")
 - Good Answers to Tough Questions (responses to key issues eg. targeting, tax cuts, all day K, etc)
 - Questions to Ask Your Candidates
 - Summary of Party Positions
- Meetings with Partners to secure resources and support
- Preparation for a province wide mailing of election materials/ Continued work on our E-Mail list/network capacity

ELECTION ACTIVITIES

Depending on the timing of the call, activities will include:

- distribution of election materials/Buttons
- organizing the Candidate's Commitment action

- ensuring child care is raised at all candidates meetings and in leadership debates
- pitching the idea of a Leaders Debate on Children's Issues' to the media
- initiating and responding to Letters to the Editor/Op Eds
- encouraging and supporting local/community actions to highlight child care
- If funding is secured, designing and using a Forum's website

Where do the Parties Stand?

The New Democrats -

Over their two terms in office, the NDP increased overall spending on child care from approximately \$40 million to \$200 million. Increases came through the introduction of Infant-Toddler Grants and the Wage Supplement Initiative (now the Compensation Contribution Program), increased subsidy rates and uptake; capital grants and expansion of Child Care Resource and Referral Programs.

In 1999, the NDP released a Discussion Paper and asked for public input on future directions for child care. Based on the response, the NDP made a commitment, in the March 2000 Throne Speech, to begin to build a publicly funded child care system in B.C.

The first phase of the new system was implemented in January, 2001 and covers 15,000 before and after school spaces in group programs. Families using these spaces pay a maximum of \$7 a day for before and after school care and \$14 for a full day of care and the provincial government provides grants to the operators to cover the additional costs of care.

In January, 2001, the NDP announced Child Care B.C. - a 4 year plan to make all licensed spaces in family, group and pre-school programs available at a maximum fee of \$14 a day by 2004. The plan also includes a 20% annual increase in the number of licensed spaces for a total of 85,000 spaces. The full plan will cost \$400 million a year.

The Liberals -

To date, the Liberals have not unveiled a detailed child care plan. In response to the announcement of Child Care B.C., the Critic stated that she was not prepared to honour NDP promises and that she supported the creation of an all party committee to explore early education. She also indicated interest in All-day Kindergarten.

In recent correspondence, the Liberal Leader, Gordon Campbell stated that:

- B.C. Liberals support and will continue to fund child care programs. They support the goal of increasing access to child care.
- Parents need to be offered a choice for their children.
- While the NDP consistently points to the child care system in Quebec as a model, Quebec's child care model is not flawless and has been subject to criticism for not serving enough families and for leading to budget shortfalls.
- Liberals want child care that is affordable, efficiently managed and targeted to those who need it.
- Liberals are sceptical of any initiative rolled out so close to the end of this government's mandate. Child Care B.C. is a massive new undertaking with profound long term ramifications.
- At the very least, this plan (Child Care B.C.) should be referred to an all-party committee of the Legislature for further discussion and study.

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Funding and Support provided by:

Status of Women Canada
- BC/Yukon Region
through Coalition of
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News Release

May 18, 2001

Provincial Alliance Demands That Liberals Commit to Child Care Program

Vancouver – BC's child care alliance is today insisting that the new Liberal government continue implementing the comprehensive child care program legislated in the Child Care BC Act.

"We are shocked by the Liberals' lack of support for something that has been researched, consulted and delayed to death," says Susan Harney, president of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and participant in the Child Care Advocacy Forum. "We worked collaboratively on this program for two years and made excellent progress.

"Our goal during the campaign was to ensure that every candidate committed to the full implementation of the Child Care BC Act," Ms Harney continues. "We are greatly concerned that the Liberals would not make this commitment. By dismantling Child Care BC at this phase, the government will leave the most vulnerable of both children and services in the lurch."

Phase two of Child Care BC includes family child care for school age children and group infant/toddler care, the most expensive and financially at-risk type of child care. With infant/toddler fees approaching \$900 per month and still not covering the full cost of care, both families and service providers face financial burdens in maintaining these programs. Under the legislation, phase two is scheduled to launch in Jan. 2002.

The Liberals' campaign platform indicated that, contrary to the legislated approach and timeframe of Child Care BC, they would "target child care funding to parents who need it most." During the campaign, several Liberal candidates acknowledged that this position would require changes to the Child Care BC Act.

In the coming weeks, the Child Care Advocacy Forum will work with parents, caregivers and others who support quality child care for all children and families, to impress on MLAs that full implementation of the Child Care BC Act is essential for BC communities.

"We will be reminding them that a failure to move forward will leave children, families, services and communities at risk," says Ms Harney. "As always, our first choice is to work constructively with government to build a publicly funded child care system. But we will not let child care's progress be unraveled without making our opposition heard and felt."

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PROTECTING THE PROGRESS

Well, the provincial election is over and, as expected, the Liberal Party has formed a majority government. Thanks to everyone who spoke out about child care. Through your work, many candidates know that child care matters to their constituents.

Our job now is to **PROTECT THE CHILD CARE B.C. ACT**
by convincing every MLA that
Child Care B.C. is the right thing to do!

The next month gives us an opportunity to make our case. Here's what you can do:

1. **Meet with your MLA.** The purpose of your meeting is to:
 - Let your MLA know that **full implementation of the Child Care B.C. Act is essential for your community.** Share specifics about the local child care situation. Make sure your MLA knows that, under this Act, infant/toddler care and school-aged spaces in family child care are scheduled to receive funding on January 2, 2002. Remind him or her that a failure to move ahead will leave children, families and services at risk!
 - **Become your MLA's child care contact.** Before the election, the Liberals said that child care needed more study and consultation. While we don't know when or how they intend to consult let's make sure that all MLA's know whom to contact in their ridings for accurate information and informed perspectives.
2. **Collect signatures and send copies of the attached letter to Premier Campbell.** Let's make sure that he knows that thousands of British Columbians expect him to 'do the right thing' for children and families.

As always, our first choice is to work constructively with government to build a publicly funded child care system - but we also need to be prepared to take action if the progress we have achieved to date begins to unravel.

*Remember - across the country, B.C. is now seen as a leader in child care.
By working together - the progress we have achieved can continue!*

May 29, 2001

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of BC

News Release

August 1, 2001

Mini-Budget Fails Children

Vancouver, BC – The provincial Government’s Mini-Budget of July 30 fails children and families, says the Child Care Advocacy Forum, an alliance of six provincial child care organizations.

“By eliminating funding for the Child Care B.C. Program, the mini-budget does nothing to address the real needs of the vast majority of B.C. families whose children need child care and pre-school programs,” says Darcelle Cottons of the BC Association of Child Care Services and Director of UBC Child Care Services.

Funding that was supposed to go to infant and toddler child care programs as of January, 2002 was cut in the budget. This funding would have made these programs available to parents for \$14 a day, and provided a savings to them of up to \$6000 a year.

Infant and toddler child care is very expensive because licensing regulations require one staff person for every four children receiving care. This requirement reflects the high level of vulnerability and needs of very young children. Most infant and toddler child care programs operate at a financial loss because, although care is expensive for providers, fees are already beyond the means of many parents.

“Now, these already fragile programs are increasingly vulnerable and I am sure that some will be forced to close,” Ms Cottons continues.

It has now been confirmed that the Liberals will repeal the Child Care B.C. Act by the end of the summer.

According to Susan Harney, Chairperson of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, “This action has dashed the hopes of the thousands of families across B.C. who expected access to affordable, quality child care. Government had an opportunity to invest in quality child care services that support children’s development and make it possible for their parents to work and study, but they have clearly chosen other priorities.”

“16 million dollars cut from the child care budget is unbelievable,” Ms Harney continues. “Instead of using dollars to increase and improve services to children and families, the province is using them to address the budget deficit it created through its sweeping tax cuts. Regrettably, young children are the ones who are being asked to pay the price.”

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Update from the Child Care Advocacy Forum

August 16, 2001

Greetings everyone!

On August 9, 2001, representatives from the Child Care Advocacy Forum met with the Honourable Lynn Stephens, Minister of State for Women's Equality, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services. As most of you know, child care is part of Ms Stephens' ministerial portfolio. This is a summary of our discussion with the Minister.

Repeal of the Child Care BC Act

The Provincial Legislature deleted Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Child Care BC Act on August 8. This means that:

- Assistance to Infant-Toddler Programs and schoolage spaces in licensed Family Child Care homes will not occur in January 2002. Assistance to other age groups and types of child care also will not proceed as described in the Act.
- The Financial Assistance Program in schoolage child care programs will continue until June 30, 2002.
- All child care contracts and grants that have been signed will be honoured until their stated expiry date.
- The Child Care Help Line will be available to respond to inquiries from parents, providers and others.

We are keenly disappointed that government chose to take this step despite the many letters they received urging them to reconsider. We must, however, continue to work with government to get the best system we can for BC's children.

Minister Stephens' Intention

The Minister has told us that she intends to work with community groups of parents, providers and others to develop a sustainable child care plan for BC. Her stated vision is a coordinated system of early childhood development services for all families with child care as the cornerstone providing a touch point in communities for a broad spectrum of early childhood development and family support programs. She has told us that she wants a plan that makes services for children 0 - 6 as universal as possible, ensures child care services are more available, accessible and affordable for families and creates a more stable, predictable, and sustainable child care system for providers. Her first concern is support to Infant-Toddler care.

The timelines are short as the plan must be ready to present to Treasury Board in November for inclusion in the new Budget on February 19, 2002. Carole James is taking the lead role in developing the plan and in arranging limited consultation over the next 6 weeks or so.

What You Can Do

1. Let the **Premier** know that **affordable quality child care remains our top priority**. That means more letters, e-mail messages, faxes and phone calls from individuals and groups calling on the government to do what is right regarding child care. **Copy your letters, e-mails, etc to Minister Stephens**. We are told that these messages are most effective when they cite real life examples of:
 - how the availability of affordable quality child care (or the lack of it) has affected families' ability to work, seek more education and provide for themselves; and/or
 - how participation in affordable quality child care programs has made a difference for a particular young child in terms of healthy development and positive learning outcomes; and/or
 - how participation in affordable quality child care has played a key role in enabling a family to cope more effectively with the demands of their parenting role.
2. Visit your MLA to help him or her to understand these same messages.
3. Send your MLA messages (letters, e-mails, faxes and phone calls) from individuals and groups in your community. Help them to recognize that changes to the Child Care BC Act means that the child care crisis still exists for children and families. Ask them what they intend to do to address this issue.
4. Invite Minister Stephens to meetings with community groups so that we can talk about child care together.
5. Invite MLAs to local community events where they have opportunities to learn more about the importance of child care to BC families.

We now have a better idea of where the government **might** be headed. However, no decisions have yet been made. We must ensure that our voices are heard once again! Keep the pressure on - there is reason to believe our messages to government make a difference!

Premier Gordon Campbell
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Email: premier@gov.bc.ca

Honourable Lynn Stephens
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Mailing address fax numbers, e-mail addresses of other MLAs are available from ***Enquiry BC*** at:

- In Metro Vancouver: 604-660-2421
- Greater Victoria: 604-387-6121
- All other B.C. Residents: 1-800-663-7867

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WHY INCREASES TO SUBSIDY WON'T FIX CHILD CARE

FALL, 2001

What is the Child Care Subsidy Program?

For close to 30 years, the child care subsidy program has been the mainstay of provincial financial support for child care. Today, the subsidy program accounts for over 60% (\$120 million year) of provincial spending on child care.

The subsidy program is a 'targeted program' that assists low -income families with their basic child care costs. Here's how it works:

The provincial government sets financial and social criteria for eligibility.

- An income test determines if a family is eligible for full or partial subsidy.
- To be eligible, parents must be working, seeking work, attending school or undergoing medical treatment.
- Families who want to enroll their child in a pre-school program may also apply.

The provincial government establishes maximum subsidy rates for all forms of care.

- Eligible families 'authorize' the provincial government to direct their subsidy to the child care program or caregiver they are using.
- If parent fees are higher than the parent's subsidy (which is usually the case), the parent must pay the difference directly to the caregiver.
- Subsidies can be used in family and centre based licensed care and pre-schools; unlicensed family care; or care in the child's own home.

Does the Subsidy Program work?

In the current user-fee system, the subsidy program meets an essential need.

However, there are a number of problems with the subsidy program:

- Subsidy rates have not been increased since 1994 and current rates do not reflect the actual cost of care. Most subsidized parents still have to pay fees, over and above their subsidy. This puts quality care out of their reach.
- Eligibility rules and income testing means that only 10% of B.C. families currently receive a child care subsidy. The vast majority of families, including many working poor, have to pay the full cost on their own.
- Over 60% of subsidies go into unregulated care, where there is no way to ensure basic safety standards and no accountability for public funds.
- The subsidy program is delivered through income assistance offices and processes. For many parents, it carries the stigma associated with 'welfare' and the application and interpretation of the 'rules' are not consistent across communities or regions.
- Because the subsidy program is tied to income assistance its primary focus is labour market attachment – not early childhood development. The intent is mother's entry into the paid labour force. The quality of care their children receive is secondary, and often based on the cheapest care available.

Why won't increases in subsidy fix child care?

At first glance, it may seem that the most efficient way to spend limited public dollars is to increase child care subsidy rates. But, a closer look shows that increasing subsidies will not build the child care system we need. Here's why:

1. Child care subsidies do not create child care spaces. Currently there are licensed child care spaces for less than 25% of the children from birth to 12 years of age in B.C.
2. Child care fees in B.C. are set in relationship to the subsidy rates. Increases in subsidy rates often result in fee increases. Subsidized parents who pay the difference between their subsidy rate and the actual cost of care are no better off and parents who don't receive a subsidy are worse off.
3. Subsidies entrench a two-tiered system. While some families can pay for enriched child care, low and moderate income families are often forced to use lower quality care.
4. Subsidies are only available for low-income parents who are at work or school. "Stay at home" parents; families where both parents attend school and sponsored immigrants and refugees are not eligible.
5. Subsidies used in the unregulated sector are not an accountable way to spend public dollars. We have a right to some assurances that public funds are being spent efficiently on services that support healthy childhood development.
6. Subsidies do not support financial stability for child care programs. Fluctuating attendance leads to reduced revenues, which puts the entire child care program at risk. Think of it this way – if we only funded fire departments on a fire-by-fire basis, fire halls wouldn't have a secure budget to keep them open every day so that they can respond to an alarm when it comes. The same is true for child care.
7. Provincial and international trends show that when regulated care is affordable, parents 'choose' it. Parental choices are dictated by cost and availability. The subsidy system has encouraged the growth of a large unregulated child care sector, not because this is what parents want, but because this is the only 'choice' available to them. Subsidies do nothing to increase real choices.

Remember, if the child care subsidy system was 'the answer', we would already have a quality system that children can access; parents can afford and that provides caregivers with an adequate livelihood.

But, after 30 years of putting most of our dollars into the subsidy system –
IT HASN'T WORKED!

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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The Child Care Advocacy Forum Responds to Provincial "Survey on Child Care Options" September 2001

Dear friends and colleagues,

This week, the Honourable Lynn Stephens, Minister of State for Women's Equality, released a "**Survey on Child Care Options**". The survey is on-line (see *Child Care Survey* link at www.gov.bc.ca/mcaws) and available at libraries, Child Care Resource and Referral Programs, Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre and other locations. The Survey results will "contribute to the development of a new vision for child care in British Columbia". Responses to the Survey need to be returned by **Oct. 15, 2001**.

Many of you have already told government what needs to be done on child care and we are confident that the continuing strength of our voices has 'kept child care on the provincial agenda'. Once again we are calling on you to help build a broad based response in your community to this Survey. **Minister Stephens needs to hear consistent messages from as many families, child care providers, organizations, and concerned residents as possible.**

You will see that the Survey questions are posed within the Liberal government's New Era promises on child care: "to target child care funding to help parents who need it most and to increase child care choices for parents by encouraging expansion of safe, affordable child care spaces".

While it is important for government to hear about current and immediate needs, it is equally important for government to hear that we are still **seeking their commitment to a 5 year plan that will move us towards a comprehensive system of quality, affordable, stable child care services for all of B.C.'s children and their families.** Without this commitment, government actions will be, at best, short-term solutions that will not build the child care system families need.

The Forum has developed some Key Messages (attached) that may help you answer the questions on the Survey. These Key Messages are directed at both long and short term solutions. We encourage you to build on our messages by adding as much localized and personalized information.

By **October 15**, here's what you can do:

1. Distribute copies of the Survey and the Forum's Key Messages broadly in your community.
2. Support parents, child care providers and others to complete the Survey by setting aside time at meetings or events for participants to fill out the Survey.
3. Volunteer to mail completed responses on behalf of those who took the time to respond.
4. Let us know if there are other ways in which we can help

Remember, when we speak together, we make a difference!

Child Care Advocacy Forum
Key Messages in Response to
Minister Lynn Stephens' "Survey on Child Care Options"

Below, are Key Messages and comments (in italics) from the Child Care Advocacy Forum that we hope will support a broad based community response to the provincial "Survey on Child Care Options". We encourage you to include both the Key Messages below and personal, local and regional information in your responses.

Minister Stephens needs to hear consistent messages from a many of us as possible. Time is short – so complete and return your Survey by Oct. 15!

Question 1: **Where do you live?**

Response: *This requires a personal response*

Question 2: **Are you: Currently using child care? A child care provider? Other?**

Response: *Again, this requires a personal response*

Question 3: **Within the fiscal realities of the province, the government wants to work with community to develop a long-term sustainable play for child care that targets funding to help parents who need to most.**

3a): **In your opinion, where is the need the greatest? Please rank priorities 1, 2, 3, etc (1 = highest)**

Response: *Here's our list of some of the greatest needs. In your list, be sure to include the **need for a plan to build a system**. If we had that, all needs could be met.*

1. A five year plan to build a comprehensive, quality, affordable child care system that meets the needs of all B.C. families and children.
2. Immediate action to address the lack of affordability and availability of Infant-Toddler care in centre and family based services.
3. Stable and affordable school-aged care, after the current Financial Assistance Program (FAP) contracts expire in June 2002.
4. Appropriate licensing, registration and training processes to protect and improve the quality of care children receive.
5. Maintenance of all existing child care programs while a new vision and system are under development.

3b) **What would be your priorities for child care funding?** Please rank...

Response: *This is a difficult question, because without a long range plan, small amounts of money in any one area won't fix the problem. Instead, we encourage you to emphasize the need for stable long term funding to build an affordable child care system and then to identify some immediate needs. For example:*

1. Stable multi-year funding to support a comprehensive child care system.
2. Funding to make Infant-Toddler care in centres and family child care homes affordable and accessible.
3. Funding to support affordability and stability of school-aged care after June 2002 in both centre and family child care programs.
4. Funding to maintain all existing child care funding programs, develop additional child care spaces and provide cost-of-living increases for all child care settings.

Question 4: **Are you aware of situations where there were too few child care spaces to meet the need?**

Response: *We are sure that you can all answer YES to this one.*

4a) **If so, what ages of children were most affected?**

Response: *Provincially, the **lack of quality, affordable care for children under 36 months** is the biggest problem (the first two categories on the Survey). Check off these two groups and all others where there are particular shortages in your community. Your answer might include all age groups.*

4b) **Are you aware of other situations that have prevented parents from accessing child care?**

Response: ***COST** is the biggest barrier provincially so check this in your response and add other factors that are problems in your community. Again, it might be all of them.*

4c) **What solutions would you suggest to address these challenges?**

Response: Solutions require a commitment to build a comprehensive system that meets the diverse needs of B.C. families and children. Based on this commitment, we need an incremental implementation plan, with adequate funding attached, to make a range of quality, inclusive child care programs affordable and accessible across the province.

Question 5 **Within current fiscal realities, what is the best way... to assist in keeping and/or expanding existing spaces for infants and toddlers? What options would you suggest?**

Response: Government should provide direct operating funds to infant-toddler programs in centres and family child care settings in order to reduce parent fees and address the real cost of providing this type of care. Capital funding, based on community plans, should be available to expand services. Employers can help by adopting family friendly policies. Municipalities and cities can facilitate the development process and community funders can support initiatives that respond to the unique needs of their communities. With these things in place, communities will be able to develop and deliver the services that families need.

Question 6: **(With regard to existing programs) What do you believe is working well? What is not working?**

Response: While improvements are always possible, in the current situation, **all** existing child care programs need to be maintained and provided with realistic cost of living increases. However, current funding programs are fragmented. Administrative efficiencies at the community and governmental levels could be achieved if some of them were streamlined into one combined operating grant.

Please note that some government-funded child care programs and supports are missing from the list on the Survey form. These include the provincial programs of West coast Child Care Resource Centre (including Westcoast Library, Westcoast Multicultural and Diversity Services, Child Care INFORM) and the BC Association of Child Care Services. We encourage those of you who use any of these services and supports to add your comments about the value of them to you, your programs and your community.

Finally, while government has not asked for Additional Comments, we encourage you to add them! Short, personal statements, especially from parents, about the difference that access to quality child care has made in your life and/or the problems you have experienced because you can't access child care have the greatest impact.

Remember, Surveys need to be returned by Oct. 15, 2001.

By mail to: Director of Child Care Policy
Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
PO Box 9899, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9T9

By Fax to: 250-356-1396

Or, you can complete the Survey on-line from the "Child Care Survey" link at www.gov.bc.ca/mcaaws.

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Focus on Federal Funds

In September 2000, BC and 9 other provinces signed an Agreement on Early Childhood Development (ECD) Services with the federal government. Under this Agreement, Ottawa will transfer \$2 billion over 5 years to provinces and territories to support early childhood development programs and services. The provinces and territories will track and report on their use of the funds.

Through BC's First Call Child & Youth Advocacy Coalition (www.firstcallbc.org), community advocates across the province have reached consensus on how our province should spend its share of these federal funds. *The First Call Position on Early Childhood Development* identifies 4 key elements of an Early Childhood Strategy for BC: Healthy Babies; Family Services and Supports; Child Care; Special Services For Children. Based on the estimated numbers of children and families served by each of these service areas, First Call urges government to spend 2/3 of the ECDI funds on child care and 1/3 on the other three areas.

For this current fiscal year (2001/2002), BC has received \$39 million. The previous provincial government had adopted First Call's position with \$26 million allocated for child care and \$13 million for the other services. As best we can determine, close to \$11 million of the funds allocated for child care have been spent. We also know that with the repeal of Child Care BC, the remaining \$15 million that would have been spent on Infant-Toddler care is up for reallocation. Of the \$13 million allocated for other services, it seems that \$8 million is being spent on the Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Initiative and the rest remains uncommitted.

For the next fiscal year (2002/2003) BC will receive \$51 million in ECDI funds. At a September 13 meeting of First Call, the Honourable Linda Reid, BC's Minister of State for Early Childhood Development, reported that discussions about how these funds are to be allocated are underway. Submissions will go to Treasury Board soon. She invited the community to offer its input on how to allocate these funds.

So, there is still some time – but we must act now! Here's what you can do:

- Call or visit your MLA and let them know that:
 - You are 'watching' how the province delivers on its promises in the Agreement on Early Childhood Development Services
 - You support spending 2/3 of the funds on Child Care and 1/3 on Healthy Babies; Family Services and Supports and Special Services for Children.

- Send the same message to:

Premier Gordon Campbell:
Fax: (250)387-0087 Email: premier@gov.bc.ca

Minister of State Reid:
Fax: (250)356-8337 Email: Linda.Reid@gems1.gov.bc.ca

Minister of State Stephens:
Fax: (250)387-4312 Email: Melissa.Safarik@gems6.gov.bc.ca

Given BC's worsening economic state, the federal ECD funds may be all we have to work with next year. Let's make sure that they are used to make a difference for as many families and children as possible.

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Region through
Coalition of Child Care
Advocates of BC

November 23, 2001.

Premier Gordon Campbell
Minister Coell
Minister Hogg,
Minister of State Stephens
Minister of State Reid

The Child Care Advocacy Forum is a coalition of six provincial organizations representing 4,000 members and child care programs. We have been monitoring with great concern the recent announcements from the Ministry of Human Resources regarding the recent decision to change the definition of employability for single parents. Like many other organizations, we opposed these changes on many levels, not the least of which is the lack of affordability and accessibility of infant/toddler spaces in our province. As you know, your government chose not to proceed with the schedule outlined in Child Care BC that would have provided the opportunity to make infant/toddler care more affordable to parents. Those of us who have been in the child care field for many years, also realized that Child Care BC would have increased the number of infant/toddler spaces based on the financial security it would have provided to child care programs.

That said, we were heartened to hear that Minister Coell has since clarified his position. "Human Resource Minister Murraray Coell said ...single parents won't be cut off social assistance unless care is available for their young children" (The Vancouver Sun, Nov. 15, 2001)

Our letter is to stress to Cabinet the importance of such decisions being made through inter-ministerial consultation. We have argued for many years that child care (that is available and affordable) is an integral component of a healthy economy. Clearly, research shows us that investing in young children through quality early childhood programs increases school readiness, positive social development and will ultimately save dollars through holistic early intervention. We strongly believe that information about and understanding how child care plays a critical role in the development of healthy communities is vital for all Cabinet Ministers when developing significant social policy. We are confident that Minister of State Stephens can provide a wealth of information to her colleagues concerning the crisis in child care. As well, we look forward to a speedy announcement of how your government will move the child care agenda forward in our province in order to best support children and families, business and education.

Once again, we urge an increase in effective inter-Ministerial communications before these kinds of policies are developed.

Sincerely,

Susan Harney
On behalf of the Child Care Advocacy Forum

PROVINCIAL BUDGET 2001 - WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Believe it or not - its that time of year again when the provincial government is asking for input on its budget priorities for next year. WE HAVE UNTIL NOV. 30 TO TELL THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT THAT CHILD CARE IS IMPORTANT TO US!

We know we are a little late in getting this information out to you - we have been busy with the Federal Election. But, its not too late to have our voices heard. There are 2 ways to get involved.

1. Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services Community Hearings

An all party committee of the B.C. legislature is touring 14 communities in the province to hear submissions, from the public, on budget priorities. **It is really important that the committee hears about child care at the each and every remaining consultation!**

More information is available through the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services Web-site: www.legis.gov.bc.ca/cmt/cmt06/ or go to the BC government's home page, to the Legislative Assembly of BC and to "Committees". On the Committee's web-pages is the membership of the committee, its terms of reference and its schedule. (We have attached a schedule below) Contact the Clerk's Office toll free at 1-877-428-8337 by E-mail at ClerkComm@leg.bc.ca. for information and/or to book your presentation.

Don't worry about an elaborate presentation - just stick to the following 3 key messages:

* The government's decision to move towards a comprehensive, publicly funded child care system is the right thing to do. Many families, with school aged children, will see an immediate benefit this coming January when they can begin to access before and after school care for \$7 a day. Other families need and want the benefits of this program extended to them as soon as possible. (Add some specific examples from your community).

* The commitment of \$16 million for this new initiative in the 2000/01 budget (annualized to \$30 million) was a good first step. And, B.C.'s promise to use a substantial amount of the federal funds it will receive from the Federal Government (First Minister's Agreement on Early Childhood Development Services) is to be applauded.

* Your message to the Committee is - "Stay the Course". A commitment to child care in next year's budget needs to be sustained and strengthened so that we can provide all families and children with access to quality, safe, affordable care as quickly as possible.

2. Ministry of Finance's Budget Consultation Document

The Ministry of Finance has released a Budget Consultation Document which is available at www.fin.gov.bc.ca/bcp/ or from your local MLAs office. The document includes a number of questions about budget priorities. Unfortunately, there is no specific question on child care - but Question 3 does ask you to identify areas where government should increase spending. So, on the line next to "Other" we encourage you to respond -

"Spend more money on child care. There is no greater investment."

You can respond by: FAX (1-250-356-8172)
 Phone (toll free - 1-877-428-8337 or collect 1-250-356-2933)
 E-mail: ClerkComm@leg.bc.ca
 ON-line at www.fin.gov.bc.ca

IT IS REALLY IMPORTANT THAT THE CHILD CARE VOICE IS HEARD - SO PLEASE
TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO RESPOND AND PASS THIS MESSAGE ON.

Schedule of STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE GOVERNMENT SERVICES Hearings:

(Check with the Clerk's Office for locations)

Victoria, Tuesday, November 21, 2000

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 01:00 p.m.

Place: Douglas Fir Committee Room, Parliament Buildings,

Courtenay, Tuesday, November 21, 2000

Time: 4:30 p.m. to 08:00 p.m.

Mission, Wednesday, November 22, 2000

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 01:00 p.m.

Vancouver, Wednesday, November 22, 2000

Time: 4:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Kelowna, Tuesday, November 28, 2000

Time: 4:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Penticton, Tuesday, November 28, 2000

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 01:00 p.m.

Cranbrook, Wednesday, November 29, 2000

Time: 5:00 p.m. to 09:00 p.m.

Grand Forks, Wednesday, November 29, 2000

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 01:00 p.m.

Kamloops, Thursday, November 30, 2000

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 02:00 p.m.

Williams Lake, Thursday, November 30, 2000

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

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A REPORT FROM THE CHILD CARE ADVOCACY FORUM

January 24, 2002

Dear Friends,

Since the devastating cuts that were announced last Thursday, the member organizations of the Forum have been trying hard to sort through information and rumour to provide you with the most up to date information as we know it. Here's what we know.

1. Families are being hit hard with numerous cuts to social programs. For a sampling of these cuts contact First Call at www.firstcallbc.org.
2. Eligibility for the Child Care Subsidy will be reduced to a lower income level. This means that many parents who now qualify for full or partial subsidy may no longer qualify. Although changes are not supposed to be in effect immediately, and we understand that guidelines have not been finalized, we need to keep track of any changes in subsidy for parents in our programs.
3. Funding for all Child Care Resource & Referral and One Stop Access programs as well as Westcoast provincial services, will end effective April 1, 2004. Some CCRR's have already been notified. Others have not. The information from the Child Care Branch was that it was their "intention" to maintain services provided by these programs until the April 2004 cut off.
4. The government is promising to amalgamate child care grants into one grant. It is unclear what grants they are talking about or how this changes the current funding process.
5. The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services service plan states that the ministry is moving away from provincial regulation to self-regulation and compliance monitoring. "The ministry will move from heavy prescriptive regulations to objective-based codes and standards". We don't know if this ideology will affect Child Care Licensing or not, although there are some rumours that regulations may be cut by 33%.

What can/should we do?

1. Call the Child Care Branch (250-356-5883). Demand to know details of the intended cuts. Ask questions. When will cuts to subsidy happen? Will there be cuts to licensing? Let us know what they say. (Toll free line 1- 877-361-1116) or email susanharney@shaw.ca.
2. Western Canada Family Child Care Association is developing strategies for organizing parents opposed to the cuts. Contact your local rep.
3. Write your MLA, Gordon Campbell and Lynn Stephens. Let them know how important CCRR programs are in your area.
4. Work with other social service agencies in your area to create a collective voice opposed to all cuts to social services.

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LIBERALS TRADE QUALITY AND THE FUTURE OF BC'S CHILDREN TO SAVE A FEW BUCKS

Eligibility for the Child Care Subsidy will be reduced to a lower income level as part of the Liberal cuts to social programs announced last week. This means that many low income families will no longer be eligible to receive assistance towards their child care fees. Child care advocates across the province are stunned and horrified.

“We have been telling the government over and over again that quality child care is not affordable for most parents. But this government, that promised to listen and work with community groups, chose to cut the heart out of Child Care BC and now they are reducing financial support to the very poorest of already low income families,” says a distraught Sharon Gregson, child care advocate.

This cut will affect the most vulnerable of our society, something that the Liberal government promised not to do during the election campaign. “Let’s be very clear. Cuts for these families will mean parents choose between quality child care and feeding their kids. We are not talking about families who have two cars, a boat and vacation property. These families are barely surviving! Any cuts will be devastating for these children” says Susan Harney of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C. “Families will be forced to leave their children in cheaper, unsafe, babysitting where adults are untrained and have no criminal record checks. Obviously the Liberals are willing to trade these children to save a few dollars”.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum (BC) strongly urges its collective membership to speak out against these cuts. What can you do?

1. Call or write your MLA. Tell them how these cuts will directly affect families.
2. Email your stories to us. The Forum is collecting information from around the province that will be passed on to the media.
3. Organize meetings in your area with other social service agencies/programs. This is a time for us to speak with one voice. As we know child care is not the only service seriously affected.
4. Check the BC Federation of Labour’s web site. (www.campaignbc.ca) This web site will provide information regarding a rally in Victoria on February 23rd as well as information about town hall meetings that will be held throughout the province.
5. Contact the Forum through our toll free number 1-877-361-1116. This phone is not a person but messages are checked regularly and someone WILL get back to you as soon as possible.
6. Let Gordon Campbell know that these kind of cuts are cruel and unfair. You can write Campbell at Room 156, Parliament Buildings, Victoria BC V8V 1X4. His email is Gordon.Campbell.mla@leg.bc.ca. Phone: 250-387-1715 Fax 250-387-0087.

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Child Care Advocacy Forum Reaffirms Common Vision and Agenda

March 2002

The last few months have been difficult ones for child care advocates. After the plan for publicly funded child care was repealed last summer, government's intentions were not clear. We had more questions than answers. We want to thank and acknowledge everyone who wrote, called and spoke up for families and children as we watched and waited.

Now, with the release of the provincial budget and Ministry Service Plans, the need for child care advocacy is clearer than ever. The current environment poses real challenges for advancing our vision, but we want you to know that all six organizational members of the Forum **are reaffirming our commitment to work together to advance our Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care Services in BC.**

In the short term, the Forum will focus on the following issues:

- The Ministry of Human Resources is reducing and restricting access to the child care subsidy program. We will develop specific advocacy tools once more details are known, but **contact your MLA today** to let them know what the impacts of reductions to subsidy will mean in your community. (To contact your MLA, go to www.gov.bc.ca/bcgov/popt/mlalookup/)
- The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services has defunded the BC Association of Child Care Services and will defund Child Care Resource and Referral Programs, One Stop Access Programs and the provincial services of Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre effective April 1, 2004. This will **dismantle the infrastructure** that the child care community has spent the last 15 years working so hard to build. Many of these defunded organizations and programs, including Westcoast and BCACCS, are committed to finding alternative funding sources so that they can continue on in some capacity. The Forum will work to **support affected programs and communities in our advocacy initiatives, and we ask you and your organization to do whatever possible to lend support.**
- The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services has announced that, in 2003/04, **existing child care grants will be combined into one operating grant** and will be available to a broader range of services, including family child care. Our vision includes family child care, but, stretching existing dollars more thinly won't support quality, affordability or sustainability. The Forum will **work to ensure that a new grant program moves us forward — not back.**

Advocacy on these immediate concerns, while essential is, at best, a stop gap measure. So, the Forum is reactivating its call to government to work with the community to:

Develop and implement a 5 year plan for a comprehensive child care system that moves child care from the current user fee system to one that is publicly funded.

You can count on us for information, tools and advocacy strategies to help make our voices heard. And, we know we can count on you to speak up and out for child care in your communities.

Because — if not us, then who?

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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of BC

CHANGES TO CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

What does it mean for your family?

On April 1, 2002 the BC government made cuts to child care subsidy.

Now -

- You need to earn **\$285 less a month** to qualify for a full subsidy
- You will get **no subsidy** if you qualify for **\$50 a month or less**
- You will get **no subsidy for pre-school fees** unless you are at work, at school or involved in an approved job search.

And more changes are coming.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum is very worried about how these changes will impact families, children, and child care programs in BC.

We think that government needs to hear what these cuts to the subsidy program mean for real BC families.

Let them know what this means for you by filling out the attached form.

Once you have filled it out – here's what to do:

1. Send it by mail, FAX or email to your MLA. For details on how to contact your MLA, go to www.gov.bc.ca/bcgov/popt/mlalookup/
2. Send a copy to the Murray Coell, the Minister of Human Resources at PO Box 9058, STN PROV GOVT, Victoria, BC, V8W 9E2 and Lynn Stephens, the Minister of State for Women's Equality at PO Box 9490 STN PROV GOVT, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9N7
3. Send us a copy at the FAX or address above OR ask your child care provider to send to us a copy so we can keep track of what families from across the province have told government.

Do it today!
**Let government know how
their decisions affect your family**

This is what changes to child care subsidy mean to my family

I am the parent/guardian of: *(list number and age of children)*

My child/children are in: *(check all that apply)*

a pre-school a group child care centre
 a family child care home before and after-school group care
 before and after-school family care
Other _____

As a result of changes to the subsidy program *(check all that apply)*

- I will no longer receive a child care subsidy
- I will have to pay _____ more a month for child care
- I will have to change my child's current child care arrangement *(Explain briefly what the change will be and why)*
- I will have to change my work schedule *(Explain briefly what the change will be and why)*
- I will have to change my school or training plan *(Explain briefly what the change will be and why)*

Other impacts on my family are:

Name (print) _____ (signature) _____
Address: _____

FAX, email or mail this to your MLA.
Find MLA contact info at www.gov.bc.ca/bcgov/popt/mlalookup/

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NEW CHILD CARE OPERATING GRANT MUST MOVE US FORWARD

May 2002

Minister Lynn Stephens, who is responsible for BC's child care policy, has made a commitment to develop and implement a new integrated operational grant to support licensed child care spaces in our province.

While details of the new operational grant are not yet final, at this point it seems that the new grant program will:

- be in place by April 1, 2003
- combine the existing Compensation Contribution Program, Infant/Toddler Incentive Grant and the Emergency, Repair, Relocation and Replacement Grants into one single grant
- be available to licensed group programs and licensed family child care providers caring for children from birth to age 12.

The Advocacy Forum is committed to working for a child care system in BC that meets the needs of all children, offers families choices from a range of quality, affordable programs and values those who provide care for our children. Based on these goals, the Advocacy Forum strives for:

- fair and equitable access to operating grants for a range of child care services, including full and part-time group programs, licensed family child care homes and license-not-required family child care providers registered with Child Care Resource and Referral Programs.
- administrative efficiencies through the consolidation of provincial child care dollars into a single, accountable funding program.

For a comprehensive, stable, quality child care system to be established in BC, there are several serious issues that government must address so that the new operating grant will move us forward.

1. Adequate Resources

Without an adequate budget, a new operating grant will not support quality, affordability or sustainability. Child care programs that access existing grants still struggle to stay afloat. Spreading existing dollars more thinly will not only fail to achieve a comprehensive, stable, quality child care system in BC but will in fact make things worse.

2. Promoting Affordability

Parents in BC pay over \$1.35 billion a year in child care fees. The cost of quality child care is out of reach for a growing number of families. Unless the new operating grant is tied to increased affordability, most children and families will still not be able to continue to be unable to afford quality care.

3. Valuing Caregivers

Research indicates that there is a direct link between caregiver salaries and the quality of child care. There is a direct link between the quality of child care and the wages and working conditions of caregivers. Without provincial funding, parent fees are the only source of revenue to support adequate compensation for those who care for our children. Parents can't afford to pay more. The loss of dedicated funding for caregiver compensation is likely to have a devastating effect on BC's child care system.

Putting Operating Grants in Context

The proposed new operating grant comes on the heels of other provincial decisions that are destabilizing child care in BC. For example,

- As of April 1, 2002 significant cuts were made to provincial Child Care Subsidies for low and moderate income families. Fewer families now qualify for subsidy and many families who still qualify receive less. Often families have no choice but to withdraw their children from their current child care arrangements because they are unable to pay the fees. While these families scramble to find cheaper and likely poorer quality care, the sustainability of existing child care programs is threatened because of impending vacancies.
- As of June 30, 2002, the current Funding Assistance Program (FAP) for school-aged child care will end. This program has made over 15,000 licensed school-aged child care spaces more affordable for BC families. The elimination of FAP will make licensed care for school aged children unaffordable for many families and our communities will see more 'latch key' children and program closures.
- As of March 31, 2004, the provincial government will no longer fund Child Care Resource and Referral Programs, One Stop Access sites and the provincial services of Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre. These programs provide essential supports to families and caregivers and play a key role in child care planning in BC communities. The dismantling of these programs will see a return to poor child care information for families and isolation for child care providers.
- As other public institutions wrestle with budget shortfalls, child care services in colleges, hospitals, and school sites are being closed or reduced. The loss of these spaces has a significant impact on families who rely on them in order to work or go to school and on the community at large who have seen them as models of seamless services for families.
- Single parents on income assistance are now required to seek work once their youngest child turns three. At a time when government policy has increased families' need for child care services, other government decisions are jeopardizing the viability of existing child care programs.

As a result of decisions across government, it is getting harder for children and families to access quality child care.

On its own - a new operating grant program will not fix the problem!

That is why the Child Care Advocacy Forum is calling on the provincial government to:

- Reverse the decisions that are destabilizing child care in BC
- Provide transition programs to support existing child care services
- Develop and implement a comprehensive 5-year plan that moves child care from the current user fee system to one funded, like other public programs, through the tax system.

As part of this 5 year plan, an adequately funded operating grant program can help move us forward!

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School Closures Threaten Child Care

28 Jun 02

The Child Care Advocacy Forum is increasingly concerned about the serious impact that school closures and changes to school calendars are having on child care programs located in and on school grounds. While school-aged child care is likely to be hit the hardest, many other programs will be affected.

Here's what we are hearing:

- Schools in a number of school districts will be closed this coming fall and child care programs in these schools will lose their space. In Prince George, all school-based child care programs have received eviction notices. If space is available this fall, rents will increase from \$300 to \$1000 a month.
- Some school districts might close schools completely during winter, spring and summer breaks. Child care programs will have to pay the full cost of keeping the schools open during these periods. But, most child care programs cannot afford these extra costs and will have to close at the very time when access to child care is vitally important to working families.
- Some school districts are considering changes to the school calendar to reduce the total number of days that schools are in operation. Many more families will need care for school- aged children for days when schools are closed but the cost of keeping child care open will be borne by the child care programs and the families they serve.

Locating child care programs in and on school grounds makes good sense!

The reasons are obvious:

- schools already exist in every neighbourhood and are publicly funded to serve children
- school-based services increase access for families with children of different ages
- school-based programs create a seamless day for school-aged children
- school-based programs support closer cooperation between families, child care providers and schools

The 1991 Report "Showing We Care: A Child Care Strategy for the 90's" recommended that the development of on-site child care in school settings should be a priority. But, here we are in 2002 and the situation is getting worse.

While we appreciate that school districts are facing financial pressures, children, families and child care services cannot be asked to pay the price.

This is yet one more example of how decisions being made across provincial ministries are destabilizing the already fragile child care system.

Help protect school-based child care programs!

Here's what you can do...

- Contact Premier Campbell at premier@gov.bc.ca and the Minister of Education, Christy Clark at christy.clark.mla@leg.bc.ca and urge them to give school boards the mandate and resources they need to cover the occupancy costs of child care programs in their facilities.
- Contact Lynn Stephens, the Minister of State for Women's Equality at lynn.stephens.mla@leg.bc.ca and call on her to take the lead in ensuring cross-ministerial cooperation on child care.
- Write, phone or visit your School Trustees to make sure they understand the impact of their decisions on child care. For School Board and District Contact info go to www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools/sdinfo

Remember, school board elections are this coming November. Make sure trustees know that your vote will depend on their support for child care.

- Contact your local District Parents Advisory Council (DPAC) to urge them to speak out loudly and clearly for the child care programs in their district. Better yet, if you have children in school, get involved in your school and district PACs.
- Contact your local Teachers' Association at www.bctf.ca/About/pres.html to urge them to include information about the impact of school closures on child care in their public education materials.

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Community Care Facilities Act and Child Care Licensing Regulation

July 2002

On April 8, 2002, the Honourable Katherine Whittred, Minister of State for Intermediate, Long Term and Home Care introduced Bill 16, a new Community Care Facility (CCF) Act. The new Act will govern the licensing of BC's residential facilities for adults and children and '**child day care facilities**'. This summer, consultations on the draft Act and Regulations are underway.

Over the last decade, the child care community has put a lot of energy into advising government on child care regulations. And, as hard as it is to begin again, the upcoming consultations on a new CCF Act and Regulations are important for the future of child care and our voices must be heard.

In the past, the Forum responded to a request from child care advocates to provide "suggestions" for responses so that individuals could respond to internet consultations with greater ease. Once again members of the Forum have prepared a list of possible responses to the questions posed on the web site.

What You Can Do

Log onto www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/ccf/consultation/child.html to find out about meetings in your region. Check out the information on the site under "Community Consultation Schedule".

Respond on line. Use the Forum's points in your submissions and add your own points.

Submissions by individuals or groups can also be sent by mail to:
Director, Community Care Licensing Branch
1520 Blanshard Street, 2nd Floor
Victoria, B.C. V8W 3C8

Or faxed to 250 - 952-1486.

Responses are limited to 150 words or less to any one section. Responses over 150 words will be "automatically truncated".

Responses must be received no later than August 15th.

Together lets make sure that any changes to licensing and regulations improve and strengthen the quality of care for BC children.

DISCUSSION FORUM — Ministry of Health

CHILD CARE LICENSING REGULATION

www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/ccf/consultation/child.html

1. “The Ministry of Health seeks your comments on its plans to revise the Child Care Licensing Regulation”.

Provide your comments on this approach:

A growing body of research confirms that licensing regulation improves the quality of child care and that higher quality care leads to better developmental outcomes for children. BC’s current child care Licensing and related Regulation is amongst the best in Canada. Of the 5 provinces included in “You Bet I Care” study (2000) care in BC in licensed group and regulated family child care settings was amongst the higher quality.

2. “The Ministry also welcomes your views on: thresholds for Licensing; staff to child ratios; group size; types of child care; staff qualifications; facility requirements; other ideas”

General Comments:

As BC already has some of the strongest child care regulations in Canada, there does not appear to be a need for any substantive changes.

Any changes to licensing regulation must ensure improvement and strengthening of the quality of all child care settings. BC’s Licensing regulations must continue to ensure that the minimum standards for quality are met in child care settings as research highlights the importance of positive early childhood experiences in determining healthy outcomes for all areas of children’s development.

3. “What do you think the threshold for licensing should be?”

Comments:

It should stay as is, at 3 and each caregiver providing care to more than 2 children, in addition to their own, should continue to require a license to operate a community care facility and to meet standards as laid out in the Act and Regulation.

4. For Family Child Care: “What do you think the staff to child ratios should be? And what changes, if any, would you make to the current requirements for Family Child Care”

Comments:

The maximum group size and staff to child ratios in licensed family child care should remain as they currently are in BC’s Regulation, regardless of how many caregivers are on site. As caregivers are one of the most important factors in ensuring quality care, government should commit adequate resources to ensure that adequate training and continuing professional development opportunities are a requirement and accessible for all Family Child Care providers.

5. For Group Care: “What do you think the staff to child ratios should be?”

Comments:

The staff to child ratios in group care should stay as they currently are in BC. Lower ratios allow more opportunities for individual attention and positive group experiences improving the likelihood of quality care for the children.

6. “What changes, if any, do you think should be made to these ratios? Why?”

Comments:

No changes should be made in staff to child ratios unless it will positively impact on the quality of care provided to the children e.g., 1:3 for infant care.

7. “What do you think the group sizes should be? Why?”

Comments:

The group sizes should stay as the current Regulation requires as smaller group sizes contribute to the quality of interaction between the children and the providers, a primary component of quality care.

8. “How many types of child care should there be? Would you combine some of these? Which ones? Would you add more?”

Comments:

Adding a mixed age category to the current types of care with similar small group sizes could allow some providers to meet the varied needs of families and communities.

9. “What do you think the staff qualifications should be?”

For Group Child Care — “Provide your opinion on the appropriate qualifications you feel are required for each of the categories and why.”

Comments:

The training requirements and expectations re continuing professional development in the current regulations should be maintained and/or strengthened.

Training for all school aged care providers should be an additional requirement.

Additional training opportunities for working with infants/toddlers, children from diverse cultures, and children who have extra support needs must continue to be a requirement and must be available and accessible across the province.

Government must commit to adequately funding and improving the accessibility to appropriate training in order to ensure that all child care providers have basic training and access to ongoing professional development opportunities.

10. “What other ideas do you have? What barriers have you encountered?”

Comments:

Government must ensure that all licensed regulated child care programs have the resources they need to meet and exceed licensing requirements. This will depend upon inter ministerial cooperation, integrated policy development, and a commitment to child care that is funded like other public programs, through the tax system.

11. “What Section(s), if any, of the current regulations is problematic? What would you do to fix it?”

Comments:

Any changes to Licensing and the Regulations must improve and strengthen the quality of care for BC’s children. While flexibility and responsiveness are important, changes must not erode the quality of care for BC’s children.

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THE NEW CHILD CARE OPERATING PROGRAM DOES NOT MOVE CHILD CARE FORWARD!

December 2002

On November 28, 2002, the Minister of State for Women's Equality announced her long awaited plans for a new Child Care Operating Funding Program.

The new funding program will begin on April 1, 2003 with a total budget of \$48 million for 2003/04.

According to government announcements, the new operating funding:

- ✓ is intended to assist eligible licensed group and family child care providers with the cost of providing care.
- ✓ replaces the current Compensation Contribution Program, Infant/Toddler Grants and Out of School Transition Funding Program.
- ✓ will be available for all licensed types of care except child minding, occasional child care at ski hills and residential care.

The funding formula for the program is based on government established rates for different age groups and on the length of time children are enrolled in care. Payments will be based on **the submission of monthly enrolment reports.**

As child care programs and family child care providers 'crunch the numbers' to see what the program means for them, the Child Care Advocacy Forum has been looking at the 'big picture' and asking the question –

Does the Child Care Operating Funding Program move us closer to our vision of an affordable, accessible, quality child care system for all?

On the positive side, we fully support the inclusion of licensed family child care in the new program. And, we have always supported the consolidation of provincial grants into one payment, which is how Infant/Toddler Grants and the Compensation Contribution Program are paid to licensed child care centres now.

But, given the impact of cross-ministerial cuts on child care, we conclude that the **new funding program will not solve the problem.** In fact, our analysis suggests that the new program will move us towards a **two-tiered system** – one for those who can afford to pay fees and another for those who can't.

Here's why:

- ✓ The overall budget for the new program is **\$14.6 million less** than government provided to the licensed child care sector in 2001. And, if government proceeds with all of its announced child care cuts, by 2004 the province will spend **36% less** on support for regulated child care!
- ✓ In spite of government's suggestion that the new program will create more spaces, the reality is that the new program is spending less money on existing child care spaces - not new ones.
- ✓ The new child care operating funding program is based on enrolment and is not tied to affordable parent fees or adequate caregiver compensation.
- ✓ Cuts to the subsidy system are having a severe effect on enrolment. In a recent survey of 699 child care providers conducted by the Advocacy Forum, 57% told us that the percentage of subsidized families using their programs has decreased, 49% report that their enrolment has decreased and 42% have reduced waitlists. This doesn't mean that families no longer need child care. Rather, it demonstrates that many low and moderate income families can no longer afford regulated care.

But, enrolment pressures will play out differently in different communities.

- ✓ In higher income communities, when previously subsidized families withdraw their children from licensed care, their spaces will be filled by middle and higher income families who can afford to pay fees. Child care services in these communities will be able to take full advantage of the new program because they are likely to have full enrolment.
- ✓ In low income communities, as subsidized families leave licensed child care services, enrolment drops. Therefore, child care services with low enrolment will not benefit from the new program to the same degree as fully enrolled programs.
- ✓ And, given that payments will be made **only after** child care programs submit monthly enrolment reports, the new funding program will not support stability. Imagine if we funded fire departments only after they told us how many fires they put out last month.

So, we are rapidly moving toward a two-tiered child care system in BC ... one that creates even more barriers for low and moderate income families while it directs scarce public dollars to enhance services for those who can most afford to pay.

During the planning stage for the new operating fund, the Advocacy Forum said that, as part of a comprehensive 5 year plan, an operating grant program could move us forward. We called for a child care funding program that was adequately resourced, with built in accountability for promoting affordability and providing fair caregiver wages. We called on the province to use the federal dollars it receives for early childhood services to enhance, rather than replace, provincial child care funding. Regrettably, the government chose not to listen.

So, where do we go from here?

For those child care programs that may benefit from the new operating grant, we call on you to lead the way by keeping parent fees as low as possible and caregiver remuneration as high as possible. We are also counting on you to dedicate time and energy to help make our long-term vision a reality for every child and family in BC.

And, we continue to call on the provincial government to:

- ✓ Reverse the child care funding cuts that are destabilizing child care in BC
- ✓ Withdraw your plans for further child care cuts over the next two years
- ✓ Develop and implement a comprehensive 5-year plan that moves child care from a user fee system to one funded, like other public programs, through the tax system.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum

December 10, 2002

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VANCOUVER
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEB. 10 2003

Provincial survey of child care programs raises the question – Where are the children?

In the fall of 2002, over 700 child care providers from across BC participated in a survey about the impact of cuts to provincial child care funding.

The picture they painted is troubling indeed!

- ✓ 57% have fewer subsidized children in their program
- ✓ 49% have decreased enrolment
- ✓ 42% have decreased waitlists
- ✓ 31% have increased their fees
- ✓ 19% report that they may close their doors in the near future
- ✓ 52% are concerned about their future viability

"Most of the child care programs who have lost children blame provincial cuts to the child care subsidy program", says Darcelle Cottons, from the BC Association of Child Care Services. "It's low and moderate income families who have to withdraw their children because they can't afford to pay for quality care. But, where are their children now?"

Survey respondents have some troubling answers. They report that very young school-aged children are being left on their own and that parents of pre-school children have no choice but to use unlicensed, informal child care arrangements.

"But, the research is clear", says Susan Harney of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC. "Licensing and regulation support high quality child care and high quality child care supports healthy childhood development. This government is creating a two-tiered system. High quality care for the children of families who can afford to pay and underground care for the rest."

Sheila Davidson, Director of SFU Childcare Society, is also concerned about instability in the child care system. "It has taken us twenty years to build the current supply of licensed and regulated care in BC. And now, over half of survey respondents say they are concerned about their future. If more licensed and regulated family and group child care programs close – where will our children go?"

The Child Care Advocacy Forum, sponsors of the survey, is calling on Premier Gordon Campbell to answer the question - **Where are the children?**

-30-

For a complete copy of the Survey Report go to www.cccabc.bc.ca and follow the links to **Where Are The Children?**

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VANCOUVER
FOUNDATION

Where Are The Children? January 2003

In the fall of 2002, the Advocacy Forum asked BC child care providers to complete a short survey. Our goal was to 'take a snapshot' of how changes to provincial child care policy and funding, which began in April 2002, are playing out in communities.

Over **700 caregivers** from every region and every type of care responded. They shared information about enrolment, participation rates of subsidized children, fees, hours, wages and other program characteristics.

The picture they paint is troubling indeed!

From those who responded, we learned that:

- ✓ 57% have fewer subsidized children in their program
- ✓ 49% have decreased enrolment
- ✓ 42% have decreased waitlists
- ✓ 31% have increased their fees
- ✓ 19% report that they may close their doors in the near future
- ✓ 52% are concerned about their future viability

These results raise serious questions about the current situation facing BC children and families.

YOUNG CHILDREN ARE LEAVING LICENSED AND REGULATED CHILD CARE

Survey results show that children from low and moderate income families are being withdrawn from licensed and regulated child care at an alarming rate.

This trend is evident in the reduced level of participation of subsidized children in licensed care and in the high level of vacancies across the province.

While reduced levels of employment are negatively affecting child care participation rates in some regions of the province, overall, respondents say that two provincial policy changes have caused changes in their program:

1. **Cuts to the child care subsidy program** have had the biggest negative impact.
2. **Termination of the Funding Assistance Program (FAP)** has negatively impacted school-aged programs.

As a result of these policies, a growing number of low and moderate income families are no longer able to afford licensed or regulated care. While some group and family child care programs have been able to fill vacancies with families who can afford the fees – our question to the provincial government is:

***Where are the children who are no longer in
licensed and regulated care?***

In spite of research that clearly demonstrates the importance of training and regulation on the quality of child care and the impact of quality child care on healthy childhood development, survey respondents paint a frightening picture...

I don't think this government realizes that raising the cost of daycare means that more children are left home alone.

Parents are forced to rely on unqualified, unregulated settings.

Most subsidized families left the centre to find more affordable unlicensed care.

Low income families are forced to choose affordable care over quality care.

The most vulnerable families are those being adversely affected – many more latchkey children in the community that are not being cared for.

Parents are at the point of sending young children home alone after school because they can't afford after school care... and we're the least expensive in town!

A TWO-TIERED SYSTEM

The survey data highlights that families and child care programs across BC have not been equally affected by changes in provincial child care policy. 17% of respondents report increased enrolment and about 34% report no change in their enrolment.

There are a variety of reasons for this – not the least of which is that families across BC still need child care. Survey results suggest that programs and caregivers who have traditionally served parents who can afford child care, or those child care providers who have been able to fill vacant spaces with families who can pay the full fee, are least affected by the policy changes.

In December 2002 the Child Care Advocacy Forum predicted that the new Child Care Operating Funding Program, to be in place on April 1, 2003, would move BC towards a two-tiered system – one

for those who can afford to pay full fees and another for those who can't. This is because the new child care operating funding program is based on enrolment and is not tied to affordable parent fees or adequate caregiver compensation.

As a result, programs that are fully enrolled, usually because they serve families who can afford to pay, will receive the most money, while programs with vacancies because the families they serve can't afford to pay, will receive less.

The Advocacy Forum's survey, conducted **before** the new operating funding is in place, demonstrates that a two-tiered system is already the reality in BC. The new operating funding will further entrench this trend.

Further, 31% of survey respondents indicate that their fees have increased, while only 9% report decreased fees. The affordability gap is growing.

We are now serving families that can afford the service, as opposed to families that need the service and can't afford it.

The program will survive (but) the impact will be greatest on families who are teetering on the edge of poverty.

Only... two income professionals can afford quality Early Childhood Education Programs for their children.

We would like to see pre-school available to all children... it should be funded through the tax dollars we give.

Due to the lack of spaces, spots are filled immediately but I have lost parents due to lack of subsidy or lack of jobs.

Our question to the provincial government is:

Where are the children whose families can't afford to pay for the programs that you intend to fund?

CHILD CARE PROGRAMS ARE VULNERABLE

There is an alarming level of instability and fragility in the existing supply of licensed and regulated child care spaces in BC. The survey indicates that 49% of responding programs have vacancies, close to 1/5 may have to close their doors soon and over half are concerned about their future viability. While it has taken over 20 years to build the current supply of licensed and regulated care in BC, there are still not enough spaces to meet the needs of all families and children.

There are a number of factors that are leading to program closure and instability, including vacancies related to subsidy reductions, rising fees in school-aged care due to the end of FAP, and the pending loss of funding negotiated by some unionized child care workers after a strike in the community social services sector in 1999 (Munroe Agreement). The survey also indicates that policies and decisions made by school boards, colleges and other public bodies are further destabilizing child care programs.

Again, respondents say it best...

I've had no choice but to be closed because of lack of business – the first time in 9 years.

Our centre will probably close in the next few months after 27 years of service.

Our centre has been in existence for 25 years and now finds itself in danger of folding. It saddens me that a fully usable space with a great history of caring could be on the verge of extinction.

This is the first time in 10 years that we are not full and do not have a waiting list.

We are finding it almost impossible to fill our integrated spaces as we live in a low income neighbourhood and parents can no longer get subsidy for pre-school.

I think it's likely that our service could close if there is no significant shift in policies around child care. We can only guess.

We are a campus daycare and we lost a number of children due to tuition increases and decreased subsidies.

Our service could close in the near future due to: school closures or consolidating and needing space; funding program uncertainty; low income area; schools wanting more for rent to increase their budget as they face huge loss.

School bus routes don't drop children off anymore. They have to walk to and from school – way too far – 4 km. So parents had to find daycare closer to the school.

Our question to the provincial government is:

Where are the children from the programs that have closed?

If more child care programs close, where will all of our children go?

CAREGIVERS ARE NOT OPTIMISTIC

Survey results indicate that some caregivers are demoralized and pessimistic about their future. Respondents comment on reduced hours of service, increased part-time enrolments, reduced staffing levels and lower pay.

In an attempt to respond to changes in provincial funding, some caregivers report that they have made changes in their hours and fees, but still can't make a go of it. Still others report that while administrative requirements are increasing, paid time for administrative work is decreasing and they are doing more unpaid work on personal time. 23% of License-not-Required caregivers and 13% of Licensed Family Child Care providers report that their wages have gone down. A number of caregivers are also concerned about the pending loss of Child Care Resource and Referral Programs.

Even though I have changed (increased) the hours of daycare and decreased the fee, I still have space available.

We feel the quality of our service will be diminished due to our attempts to downsize.

What about the educators? What other profession accepts (being) treated with so little respect despite the responsibility this career involves?

I am very concerned about proposed cuts to Child Care Resource and Referral. It is a vital support to parents and caregivers.

(The likely closure of the CCRR) would have a devastating affect on daycare programs... I would consider closing my program without the CCRR.

We need the continued support of the Child Care Resource and Referral Program. If this program will be discontinued, I feel certain that my services in the daycare business will probably discontinue.

I am very disappointed (that) the support and referral program is being closed. They have guided me in many ways.

Respondents indicate that they are still working hard to provide the best possible program. Some commented on efforts they are making to support families through fundraising, bursaries, food supplements, etc. However, 52% of respondents are concerned about their future and some are clearly demoralized.

I'm concerned, but hope we will be able to work it out. If (not), I think it's likely our services could close in the near future. How sad – we have been in operation since 1975 and currently have second generation children enrolled.

I have been teaching in child care for 29 years and feel that I am not wanting to continue to struggle with low wages, few benefits and lack of respect from government leaders.

We are struggling and the future does not look bright.

Our question to the provincial government is:

Where will children go when experienced child care providers leave the field?

WE ARE NOT MOVING FORWARD

This summary provides a 'snapshot' of what over 700 child care providers from across BC told us. The picture indicates that for many children, families and child care providers, things are **not** getting better. Rather, as one respondent noted:

We have returned to the way it was 15 years ago.

Our final question to the provincial government is:

NOW THAT THE REAL IMPACT OF YOUR POLICIES ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IS CLEAR – WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

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THE ADVOCACY FORUM RESPONDS TO THE PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL BUDGETS FEBRUARY 2003

Tuesday, February 18, 2003 was a disappointing day for parents, caregivers and advocates across BC and Canada. It was the day when both BC's Minister of Finance, Gary Collins, and Canada's Minister of Finance, John Manley, tabled their respective provincial and federal 2003/04 budgets.

The **provincial budget** holds few surprises for the child care community and families and does nothing to repair the damage done to children, families and child care services across BC.

And, while the **federal budget** holds some promise, it falls far short of what the child care community had been led to expect.

Let's have a look at the key child care items in each:

THE PROVINCIAL BUDGET

Despite what government would like you to believe, the 2003/04 provincial budget includes significant cuts to provincial spending on child care. Total provincial spending on child care by the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services (MCAWS) will be reduced from \$197 million to \$184 million in 2003/04. And, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) will make substantial cuts to Supported Child Care.

Here are some of the key items:

1. Child Care Subsidy Income Threshold

As previously announced by Minister Lynn Stephens, government claims to be 'raising' the income threshold for child care subsidies by \$100 a month. Minister Stephens proudly states that this 'increase' is due to careful budget management in the Ministry of Human Resources (MHR).

Here's what is really going on:

- On April 1, 2002 the provincial government reduced the income threshold at which parents are eligible for a child care subsidy by **\$285 a month** and tightened other eligibility rules. Over 10,500 families were negatively affected.
- As of April 1, 2003, families will still have to earn **\$185 less a month** than they did a year ago to qualify for subsidy. Hardly a raise!
- \$10 million is allocated for this 'increase'. While government had planned to cut \$26 million from subsidies, now they will only **cut \$16 million**. No matter how you look at it, that's not an increase!

- Families still cannot access child care subsidies for pre-school unless they are employed or in an approved training program. And, parents who should qualify for a monthly subsidy of \$50 or less, will still receive nothing.
- The decision to put some money back into subsidies has **nothing to do with ‘careful budget management’ by MHR** where savings come at the expense of the poorest amongst us.
- Rather, it has **everything to do with the strong voices of thousands of parents, caregivers and concerned citizens** who told government that their policies are wrecking havoc on child care.

We know that for families struggling to pay for quality child care, every penny counts.

But, the revised income threshold level only brings us back to where we were a decade ago. In the mean time, children have left licensed and regulated care, child care services have been destabilized, countless hours have been wasted on assessing and reassessing eligibility and families have been lost in the process. All together, the provincial increase in subsidy income thresholds is **“not good enough!”**

2. Subsidy Transfer to Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services

The provincial budget confirms earlier announcements that the child care subsidy program will be transferred from MHR to MCAWS.

While we trust that this will allow for more coherent policies, simple program transfers are not the answer.

Here’s why.

- Over the last decade ‘child care’ has been in at least 5 different provincial ministries. Sometimes the subsidy program has been in the same ministry as child care, sometimes not.
- The evidence indicates that the ‘placement’ of child care programs only makes a difference when there is the **political will to champion child care** backed up with **sufficient resources** to provide all children with access to quality services.
- The transfer of the subsidy program to MCAWS does nothing to address the on-going **lack of coordination** between this government’s child care and early years policies and strategies.
- This fragmentation is perhaps most evident in MCFD’s recent released report on how BC spent the federal funds it received in 2001/02 for early childhood initiatives. Despite community consensus that 2/3 of the federal funds should be allocated to child care, only \$6 million of the total allocation of \$39 million went to child care.

3. Increasing the number of child care spaces eligible for ‘subsidy assistance’

The provincial budget talks about a 50% increase in the number of child care spaces ‘eligible for subsidy assistance in the coming year’.

While the language is confusing, this refers to the new Child Care Operating Funding program, scheduled to begin April 1, 2003. And the increase in the number of eligible spaces refers to the fact that licensed family child cares can apply for this funding.

The Advocacy Forum fully supports the inclusion of licensed family child care in this new program. However, we are alarmed that:

- The total budget for the Child Care Operating Funding program is \$48 million. This is **\$14.5 million less** than is currently provided in grants to group and family care.
- In spite of suggestion that the new program will create more spaces, the new program will provide less money for existing child care spaces - not new ones.
- The new child care operating funding program is not tied to affordable parent fees or adequate caregiver compensation.
- The new operating program is based on enrolment. Cuts to the child care subsidy program and other cuts have led to vacancies in child care programs serving low and moderate income families. As a result, programs serving higher income families, which tend to be fully enrolled, will benefit the most.

4. Early Childhood Development Partnership Fund

The provincial budget speech reiterates a commitment from the province to provide a one-time-only grant of \$10 million for an early childhood development partnership with Credit Union Central of British Columbia and the United Way. This expenditure will occur in the current (2002/03) fiscal year.

The grant will go to the United Way of the Lower Mainland's *Success by 6* initiative to support community partnerships in early childhood development throughout BC.

This is not the first time the government has made a substantial grant to a philanthropic organization. The first was a \$5 million grant, from BC's federal early childhood development budget, to the Vancouver Foundation for an Early Years Legacy Fund.

At best, we are puzzled by this initiative; at worst we are alarmed. Here's why

- We believe that it is government's job to fund core child care and other early childhood development services. It is the job of philanthropic organizations to supplement, complement and test innovation in these services. These bodies will never have sufficient funds to take on government's role.
- This allocation is occurring at a time when provincial funding for services for children and their families is being significantly reduced.

We have tremendous respect for community volunteers who work to improve the quality of life for children and we are proud to count ourselves amongst them. And, the Advocacy Forum appreciates the financial support we have received from the Vancouver Foundation and the United Way, *Success by 6* Initiative.

However, in the current context, government's priority must be to allocate its scarce public resources to restore funding to child care and other related core services.

THE FEDERAL BUDGET

As widely announced in the media, the federal budget commits \$935 million over the next 5 years to help increase access to quality child care and early learning opportunities for children from 0-6, especially for low-income and single-parent families. \$35 million is for aboriginal child care and \$900 million for provinces and territories.

While we are pleased that the federal government is acknowledging its role in the development of a national child care strategy, we have concerns:

- The total **funds do not come close to meeting the need**. Even the Social Policy Committee of the National Liberal Party Caucus recommended a total federal commitment of \$10.9 billion for a national child care program. And, their recommendation only addressed the needs of children from 0-6 years of age and did not include the essential need for school-aged care.
- Only **\$100 million of the total funds will be spent over the next two years** - \$25 million in 2003/04 and \$75 million in 2004/05. The bulk of the funds will come only after a federal election. Given the legacy of broken federal promises on child care, this is cause for concern.
- Federal funds are **dependent on “reaching an agreement with the provinces and territories.”** We support holding provinces accountable for spending federal funds on quality, regulated child care and for using federal funds to complement, not replace, provincial child care funding. But, even before the federal budget, some provinces were balking at these conditions. Given the small amount of money on the table, an agreement will be even harder to reach.

If the new federal commitment is going to make a difference, the federal government will need to put more money on the table, especially in the first two years. And, our provincial government will need to sign on to an agreement that ensures these funds go to quality, regulated child care and are not used to replace provincial reductions in funding to child care.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

As the federal and provincial governments debate and implement their 2003/04 budgets, more details will become clear. We will do our best to keep you informed about these developments.

At the federal level, we will work with child care advocates across Canada to ensure that the federal government's promises become reality.

At the provincial level, we urge you to join us in our continuing call on government to:

- Stop further cuts to child care
- Restore the child care funding cut to date
- Adequately fund a 5 year plan that entitles all children access to quality regulated child care
- Negotiate an agreement with the federal government that brings dedicated federal funds into BC for quality regulated child care and ensures that new federal funds will not be used to replace provincial cuts.

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THE NEW INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING AND CARE MARCH 2003

What does it say?

On March 13, 2003 the federal government signed a *Multilateral Framework on Early Childhood Learning and Care* with 9 provinces and 3 territories. (Quebec, while supporting the principles of this agreement, maintains sole responsibility over its social policy and makes significant provincial investments in child care.)

This agreement builds on the recent federal budget allocation of \$935 million to help improve access to quality child care and early learning opportunities for young children. \$35 million is for aboriginal child care and \$900 million will be transferred to provinces and territories to invest in regulated early learning and child care programs for children under six.

The \$900 million will be transferred to provinces and territories over a five year period. \$25 million is to be spent in the first year, (2003/04), \$75 million in the second, and \$150 million, \$300 million and \$350 million in the third, fourth and fifth years respectively.

These funds are over and above the federal dollars that provinces and territories currently receive under the Agreement on Early Childhood Development signed in September 2000.

The *Multilateral Framework of Early Childhood Learning and Care* includes objectives, areas of investment, effective approaches and public reporting requirements for the new funds.

Some of the key features of the agreement are:

- The federal funds are to be spent on regulated programs "...that meet quality standards that are established and monitored by provincial/ territorial governments."
- Primarily, funding is to go to direct care in settings such as child care centres, family child care homes and preschools.
- Types of investment can include capital and operating funds, fee subsidies, wage enhancements, training, professional development and support, quality assurance and parent information and referral.
- Using 2002/03 as a baseline, provinces and territories are to report annually on their progress. Public reporting will include information on provincial/territorial expenditures on all early learning and child care programs and services and on indicators of availability, affordability and quality.

What does it mean?

On the positive side, the new agreement means that:

- The federal government has acknowledged that it has a role to play in developing a national child care strategy – which we applaud.
- The federal government has heard our message that funds must be spent on regulated child care that meets standards associated with quality.
- The annual reporting requirements put some pressure on provinces to focus on direct care rather than exclusively on information and resources.

However, we have a number of remaining concerns:

- \$900 million does not come close to meeting the need. Even the Social Policy Committee of the National Liberal Party Caucus called for \$10.9 billion over 4 years for a child care program.
- Only \$100 million is allocated for the first two years. In BC, this means about \$2.5 million in year 1 and \$7.5 million in year 2 – not enough to be an effective incentive to reverse the province's plans for more child care cuts.
- The program only addresses child care for children under the age of six and is silent on school-aged care.
- There are no targets and timelines so provinces and territories are not accountable for meeting any benchmarks.

What is our response?

The Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care is a small but important first step in building a cross Canada child care program.

But, if this agreement is to meet its promise **the federal government** must:

- "Reprofile the funds" so that more is available in the first two years of the program.

And, **our provincial government** must:

- Use the federal dollars to complement, not replace, provincial child care spending.
- As a first step, direct new federal dollars to licensed family and group child care programs which meet the agreement's definition of 'regulated' and set the benchmark for quality care in BC.
- Ensure that a fair share of BC's Early Childhood Initiatives Funds are spent on child care – a cornerstones of a comprehensive early childhood strategy.

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VANCOUVER
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Anything But Child Care BC's New ABC's June 2003

The government of BC has once again demonstrated its complete lack of commitment to a quality, inclusive child care system that meets the needs of **all** children and their families. The latest evidence is found in the mixed messages government is sending about its decision to reduce budget cuts in the Ministry to Children and Family Development (MCFD) from 23% to 11%.

On the one hand, government promises that programs and initiatives supporting early childhood development will be exempt from budget cuts. Their investments in MCFD's Supported Child Care (SCC) Program, which provides for the inclusion of 6000 children in regulated child care and pre-school settings, are protected with no reduction in funding or service.

Recent government documents further indicate that \$3.3 million for SCC will come from BC's share of new federal funding negotiated under the recent provincial/ territorial/ federal agreement on "Early Learning and Child Care".

Given the Avocacy Forum's long standing position supporting a regulated child care system that is fully inclusive and meets the needs of every child - regardless of their ability, language, culture, family income and status or other differences – one might expect us to applaud MCFD's decision.

Regrettably, here is why we can't:

- The very documents that outline the BC government's decision to use new federal child care dollars for SCC, also announce that SCC will now "**focus on child development rather than childcare**".
- MCFD's announcement comes on the heels of provincial budget cuts that continue to devastate child care in BC. Over a 3 year period, the province is cutting close to \$50 million from its spending on regulated child care. All over BC, fewer families can afford regulated care, caregiver wages are dropping, and licensed child care programs are closing.
- On top of cuts to its own funding for child care, BC refuses to spend federal 'early childhood' funds that it receives through two separate provincial/territorial/federal agreements on regulated child care.

- The first source of federal funds is the Early Childhood Development Agreement (ECD). Under this agreement, BC is receiving \$291 million over 5 years (2000/01 - 2004/05).
- The province has only reported on how it spent the first year's ECD allocation of \$39.9 million. Despite wide spread community consensus that 2/3 of these funds should go to child care, BC only spent \$6 million on child care. Shockingly, the government underspent its total ECD budget that year by \$6 million and has not yet said how it is spending the \$119.6 that it received under this agreement in years 2 and 3.
- The second source of federal funds comes through the recently negotiated Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care. This new federal/provincial/territorial agreement grew out of the failure of the ECD agreement to improve child care in many parts of Canada, including BC. As a result, advocates convinced the federal government to commit new funds over and above the ECD budget for regulated child care.
- Under this new agreement, BC will receive an additional \$121.6 million over 5 years starting with this year's installment of \$3.3 million.
- BC, along with the other provinces and territories who signed on, agreed to "further invest in provincially/territorially **regulated early learning and child care programs** for children under six (which) ... meet quality standards that are established and monitored by provincial/territorial governments".
- The Agreement also says that the federal funding initiatives "will **primarily provide direct care and early learning** for children in settings such as **child care centres, family child care homes, preschools, and nursery schools**. Types of investments could include capital and operating funding, fee subsidies, wage enhancements, training, professional development and support, quality assurance, and parent information and referral".

Yet, in spite of having signed this agreement, BC plans to spend these dollars on its refocused SCC program that will no longer focus on child care!

The actions of the province speak louder than their words. Its actions tell us that it will continue to:

- Ignore the needs of close to 389,000 BC children under the age of 12 whose mothers are in the paid labour force.
- Insist on making a false and dangerous separation between childhood development and regulated child care.
- Implement an ABC policy of "Anything But Child Care" that will only lead to reduced access to licensed child care for children with extra support needs, especially for those whose parents are in the paid labour force.

Let **US** be clear where we stand:

- We **oppose cuts in services** for children, youth and their families. An 11% cut to MCFD is not ok, especially when some services are 'protected' at the expense of others. **All** BC children are entitled to have their needs met.
- We **fully support an inclusive child care system** that provides all children access to a full range of quality, licensed child care programs. Successful inclusion depends on a strong 'typical', regulated child care system that is complemented and supplemented by dedicated resources through Supported Child Care programs for those with additional needs. We will continue to work towards this vision.
- We **respect the families and services providers in the community living sector** who are tireless and effective advocates for their children and will continue to work with them to build communities that nurture every child.

We continue to call on the provincial government to:

1. Direct the new federal funds to regulated child care as stipulated in the Multilateral Framework.
2. Restore provincial funding for regulated child care and early learning programs.
3. Use federal dollars to complement, not replace, provincial spending on regulated child care and early learning programs.
4. Spend a fair share of BC's Early Childhood Development Agreement funds on regulated child care – a cornerstone of a comprehensive early childhood strategy.

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Publicly Funded Child Care What Does It Mean?

The Advocacy Forum is committed to working for a child care system in BC that entitles all children access to quality child care and early childhood programs, regardless of their families' economic or employment status.

Such a system requires public policies and budgets that move child care from a user fee system – which it is now - to one primarily funded through the tax system like so many other services in our communities.

Public parks, libraries, firehalls, schools, hospitals, and streets are examples of facilities and services that are paid for through the tax system. These services are there for anyone in the community who wants or needs to use them. It's not that they are 'free services'. Funding for their operating budgets primarily comes from one or more levels of government.

Public libraries are a good example. It costs money to build, stock and run libraries. As a society, we have decided that it makes sense to pool our money, through the tax system, so that everyone can use them. People can still go to a bookstore to buy books – but everyone, regardless of their income, can borrow books from the public library.

In some cases, publicly funded services have a small fee attached. Pay parking at a public beach is one example. Public funding means that the beach will still be there even if everyone comes by foot, bike or bus.

This is NOT the approach we use to fund child care. That's not to say that there is no public funding of child care. The child care subsidy program and the child care operating fund are funded through the taxes we pay to the province and anyone who uses these programs is receiving public funds.

The problem is that current public funding only covers a small part of the cost of child care. Unlike parks or libraries, child care is primarily funded by parent fees. In BC, public funding for child care totals around \$200 million a year. BC parents pay more than \$1.3 BILLION each year from their own pockets.

This user-fee system is not working! Children from middle and lower income families cannot access quality child care programs because their families cannot afford to pay costly fees. Child care can actually cost parents more than their child's university education later on, but it comes at a time when family earning power is often less. The needs of too many young children and their families go unmet because of a lack of public funding for child care.

Our goal is to turn the tables so that most of the cost of child care comes from public funding with a small portion coming from parent fees. The child care system would be stable and accessible. Everyone who pays taxes would be supporting the child care system because, like parks and schools, these services benefit us all. Quality child care offers children a good start in life – and that's good for everyone!

In a nutshell, this is what we mean by publicly funded child care.

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Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance 2003 Pre-Budget Hearings August, 2003

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Organizational Information

The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum is an alliance of six provincial child care organizations that bring together over 4000 individuals, child care providers and community organizations who are concerned about child care in BC. Since 1999, the member organizations of the Advocacy Forum have advanced a Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care in BC.

The Advocacy Forum advocates for a publicly funded child care system that:

- ✓ Entitles all children to access quality child care programs regardless of their families' economic or employment status.
- ✓ Offers families choices from a range of coordinated, licensed, affordable, quality child care and early childhood programs.
- ✓ Provides early childhood educators with wages, benefits and working conditions that are commensurate with their responsibilities.
- ✓ Is the cornerstone of a comprehensive early childhood development strategy and a key piece of comprehensive family policy that includes extended parental leave and progressive family/work policies.

The Case for Publicly Funded Child Care

For over three decades, a growing body of research has documented the need for a comprehensive child care system in Canada; the benefits to children, families, and society at large of public investment in quality child care; and the degree to which Canada is lagging behind other developed countries in addressing this issue.

A brief overview of some key findings of the research indicates that:

1. Most Canadians support our vision.

Results of a 2002 poll on "Perceptions of Quality Child Care" show that:

- 90% of Canadians want a nationally coordinated child care plan that gives all children access to quality child care.
- 86% of Canadians support a publicly funded child care system that makes quality child care available to all children.
- 88% of Canadians support increased wages for caregivers.

(Millward Brown Goldfarb for Canadian Child Care Federation/Child Care Advocacy Assn. of Canada)

2. Quality child care is good for children.

"There is encouraging evidence that good nutrition, nurturing and responsive caregiving in the first years of life, linked with good early child development programs, improve the outcomes for all children's learning, behaviour and physical and mental health throughout life."

(1999, McCain, Mustard, Early Years Study)

3. Public investment in child care makes good economic sense.

A 1998 cost-benefit analysis of child care in Canada concluded that for every \$1 invested in licensed child care there is a \$2 benefit. (The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care, Cleveland and Krashinsky)

4. Other countries recognize the value of investing in the early years.

“Improving the quality of, and access to early childhood education and care has become a major policy priority in OECD Member countries....the early years are increasingly viewed as the first step in lifelong learning and a key component of a successful education, social and family policy agenda.”

(Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001)

5. Child care in Canada and BC lags behind.

A 2001 study of Canadian child care found that other than in Quebec, over the last decade, regulated child care has declined, policy incoherence has grown and Canada has fallen behind other countries. (Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2001, Friendly, Beach and Turiano)

A survey of 700 BC caregivers in the fall of 2002 indicates that as a result of provincial funding cuts, 57% of child care programs have fewer subsidized children, 49% have decreased enrolment, 31% have had to increase fees, 19% fear they may have to close their doors in the near future and 52% are concerned about their future viability. (Where Are The Children, 2002, BC Child Care Advocacy Forum)

Lessons Learned from Recent Federal Initiatives

Over the last three years, the federal, provincial and territorial governments (except Quebec) have reached two agreements related to early childhood and child care – the 2001 **Early Childhood Development Agreement (ECDI)** and the 2003 **Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care**. Under these arrangements, the federal government will transfer \$412.6 million to BC over an 8 year period to help support a range of early childhood development services, including regulated child care.

While the Advocacy Forum welcomes a renewed willingness on the part of the federal government to accept some responsibility for developing a child care system that meets the needs of all of Canada’s children, we have identified three serious flaws in the approach used to date:

1. Federal funds committed to date are insufficient. Under the transfer arrangements now in place, the federal government has committed a total of \$1.435 billion over an 8 year period for a wide range of early childhood programs including, but not limited to, licensed child care. By comparison, in 2002, the National Liberal Caucus Social Policy Committee recommended federal spending of \$10.9 billion over a 4 year period on child care. And, the European Union, recommends that countries spend at least 1% of their GDP on child care. In Canada, this would result in \$10 billion annually spent on child care.
2. Provincial and territorial accountability for how federal funds are allocated is inadequate. This was first apparent when BC and other provinces allocated little or none of their ECDI funds to child care. To date, BC has reported that only spent \$6 million of the \$159.9 million received under the ECDI agreement on regulated child care.

As a result of similar concerns elsewhere, the Advocacy Forum and others called for additional federal funds dedicated to regulated child care. While the level of funding provided under the resulting Multilateral Framework was very disappointing, we were pleased by the clear focus on regulated child care. However, BC has announced that it will spend the \$3.3 million received this year under the Multilateral Framework on a program which, while it used to support the inclusion of children with extra support needs in regulated child care, is now being 'refocused' to provide some support for inclusion in settings such as community centres and libraries. While inclusion in these programs is the right of every child, they do not and cannot replace the need for quality, affordable, regulated child care.

3. Federal funds are being used to replace rather than supplement provincial child care spending. At the same time as BC is allocating a mere pittance of federal funds to child care, the province is cutting much larger amounts from its own child care budget. Federal funds are being used to redress some of the most glaring cuts but overall, children, families and communities in BC are worse off – not better.

Recommendations to the Standing Committee on Finance

While the federal government is to be commended for taking some important first steps in addressing the child care crisis in Canada, regrettably the transfer arrangements now in place have not had the desired outcome and have, to some degree, increased disparities across the country.

However, there are concrete steps the federal government can and must take to ensure that its stated intentions of supporting the 'critical early years' of children's development become a reality.

We therefore urge the Standing Committee on Finance to recommend that the upcoming federal budget:

1. Commit sufficient federal funds to develop a publicly funded child care system that meets the needs of all of Canada's children (birth to twelve years of age) regardless of their ability, family income or employment status, language, culture or geographic location.
2. Require that, as a condition of receiving federal child care funds, provinces/territories agree to use the funds to develop publicly funded, high quality, accessible and affordable child care systems that meet the diverse needs of the children and families in their jurisdictions.
3. Require that provinces/territories table 5 year incremental plans with timelines and targets for the development of a child care system and provide clear, annual reporting on their progress against these targets and timelines.
4. Require that provinces/territories maintain or increase their child care spending and use federal funds to supplement rather than replace provincial/territorial child care funding.
5. Establish mechanisms to ensure provincial/territorial compliance with the terms of federal/ provincial/territorial agreements that include active community participation in monitoring provincial/ territorial progress and resolving disagreements and disputes.

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THEY CAN AFFORD IT!

August, 2003

Recently, Minister Lynn Stephens announced 'key elements' of a long-term plan for child care. Minister Stephens says that this is a 'sustainable plan' that 'truly supports families, children and childcare providers' in BC. We disagree! Over a 3 year period, this 'child care plan' represents cuts of close to \$50 million in provincial spending on child care. As a result, affordability, inclusion, quality and caregiver remuneration are getting worse, not better.

We have a concrete solution for how government can undo the damage and invest in a child care system that meets the needs of all. Here's how:

- ✓ Under the federal/provincial Agreement on Early Childhood Development Initiatives (ECDI) signed in Sept. 2000, BC will receive \$66.3 million in 2003/04; \$66.1 million in 2004/05; \$66.6 million in 2005/06.
- ✓ Under the new federal/provincial Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care (MF) signed in March, 2003 BC will receive \$3.3 million this year, \$10.4 in 2004/05; \$20.1 million in 2005/06; \$40.5 million in 2006/07; and \$47.6 million on 2007/08.
- ✓ If the provincial government followed community advice and spent 2/3 of the ECDI funds on child care and all of the funds under the Multilateral Framework on regulated child care, as they are required to do, over the next 3 years, they could increase child care spending as follows:

2003/04 - \$44.2 million (ECDI) + \$3.3 million (MF) = \$47.5 million
2004/05 - \$44 million (ECDI) + \$10.4 million (MF) = \$54.4 million
2005/06 - \$44.4 million (ECDI) + \$20.1 million (MF) = \$64.5 million

These funds and a commitment to restore provincial child care spending to 2000/01 levels could begin to make a real difference. BC could cap parent fees at more affordable rates, bring wages in the sector up to adequate benchmarks, stabilize existing child care programs and enhance support to parents and caregivers.

It's not about what government can afford to do – it's about political will.

To date, BC has only spent \$6 million of its total ECDI funds on child care. Another \$6 million of the 2001/02 ECDI allocation has not yet been spent. The government has also announced that all of the first year's allocation under the new Multilateral Framework will go to Supported Child Care, which is being refocused on child development rather than on child care.

Clearly, this government is prepared to spend federal and provincial funds on **anything but child care.**

Email Premier Campbell at premier@gov.bc.ca, Minister Lynn Stephens at lynn.stephens.mla@leg.bc.ca, the Minister of Finance, Gary Collins at gary.collins.mla@leg.bc.ca and your MLA. Ask them to explain where \$166.4 million that could and should be spent on child care is going.

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Submission to the BC Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services Pre-Budget Consultation, Fall 2003

INTRODUCTION

The Child Care Advocacy Forum is an alliance of 6 provincial child care organizations that brings together over 4000 individuals, groups and service providers in BC. Since 1999, the Advocacy Forum has worked to advance a "Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care Services in BC". (http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum/common_agenda.html)

The Advocacy Forum advocates for a publicly funded child care system that:

- Entitles all children to access quality child care programs regardless of their families' economic or employment status.
- Offers families choices from a range of coordinated, licensed, affordable, quality child care and early childhood programs.
- Provides early childhood educators with wages, benefits and working conditions that are commensurate with their responsibilities.
- Is the cornerstone of a comprehensive early childhood development strategy and a key piece of comprehensive family policy that includes extended parental leave and progressive family/work policies.

The work of the Advocacy Forum is based on the accumulated evidence of over three decades of research. This growing body of research confirms the need for a comprehensive child care system in BC; the benefits of public investment in quality child care for children, families, and society at large; and the degree to which our province and country are lagging behind other developed societies in addressing this issue.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN BC

The Advocacy Forum is increasingly concerned about the negative impact that provincial cuts to child care funding are having on children, families and child care services across BC. Here is why:

1. The vast majority of BC mothers of young children work outside of the home. Statistics from 2001, indicate that 62.8% of mothers with children two years of age and younger, 69.4% of mothers of children from 3-5 years of age and 77.3% of mothers of children 6-15 participate in BC's workforce. In total, the mothers of 388,900 BC children aged 0-12 were in the paid labour force. ⁱ

2. There are not enough regulated child care spaces to meet the need. In 2001, BC had only 72,949 regulated child care spaces which meets the needs of 12.1% of children under the age of 12. As a result of this shortage, close to 317,000 children under the age of 12 whose mothers are in the paid labour force do NOT have access to a regulated child care space. ⁱⁱ

3. The quality of care that children receive in their early years affects their life long development. Quality care in children's early years promotes healthy development, while poor quality care can do harm. The factors associated with quality child care, including trained and adequately compensated staff, maximum group sizes, adult:child ratios and developmentally appropriate programming are more likely to be found in regulated child care. Yet, given the shortage of regulated child care spaces in BC, the majority of children with working mothers are in unregulated care.

4. The last two provincial budgets included significant cuts to child care funding – with more to come. Over a three year period, the provincial government has cut or has announced its intention to cut over \$50 million from an already inadequate child care budget.

5. Provincial cuts are eroding an already fragile child care system. A survey of 700 BC caregivers in the fall of 2002 indicated that as a result of provincial funding cuts, 57% of child care programs have fewer subsidized children, 49% have decreased enrolment, 31% have had to increase fees, 19% fear they may have to close their doors in the near future and 52% are concerned about their future viability. Across BC, fewer families can afford regulated care, caregiver wages are dropping and licensed child care spaces are being lostⁱⁱⁱ.

6. Provincial policies are creating a two-tiered child care system. As a result of cuts to the child care subsidy program, and other cuts that have led to increases in child care fees, many low and moderate income families have had to withdraw their children from licensed care. Programs that serve these families have vacancies and some have closed or reduced service. Yet, programs in more affluent communities, where families can pay full fees, are fully enrolled, often with long wait lists. The new provincial Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) introduced in April 2003 is making things worse. Under CCOF, a program's grant is based on their actual enrolment. Programs that are fully enrolled, usually because they serve families who can afford to pay, receive the most money. Programs with vacancies, because the families they serve can't afford to enroll, receive less. This leads to quality care for those who can afford it and substandard care for the rest.

7. BC is not spending designated federal transfer payments on regulated child care. Under the Early Childhood Development Agreement, BC will receive \$291 million over 5 years (2000/01 –2004/05) from the federal government to spend on the early years. To date, BC has only reported on its first year's spending of which only \$6 million of a total \$39.9 million went to child care. The second source of federal funds is the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care through which BC will receive an additional \$121.6 million over 5 years. These funds are to be used to "further invest in provincially/ territorially regulated early learning and child care programs for children under six (which) ... meet quality standards that are established and monitored by provincial/territorial governments".^{iv} Yet, BC is spending all of its first year Multilateral Framework allocation of \$3.3 million on Supported Child Care –a program that is simultaneously being redesigned by the Ministry of Children and Family Development to focus on child development rather than child care. While BC could invest an additional \$166.4 million of federal funds on regulated child care, instead the province is spending it on 'anything but child care' and to replace, rather than supplement, provincial spending.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BC can't work without child care. In the short term, BC's economy can only work when parents have access to quality, stable and affordable care for their children. In the long-term, BC's economy can only work when children have quality care during their critically important early years that helps them to become healthy, contributing members of our society. Like other economic and social stimuli, child care must be a priority area for investment in our future.

We therefore recommend that, in developing its 2004/05 budget, the provincial government:

1. Reverse child care funding cuts that are destabilizing child care in BC, withdraw plans to make further cuts and restore provincial spending on child care to 2001/02 levels.
2. Develop and implement a comprehensive 5-year plan that moves child care from a user fee system to one funded, like other public programs, through the tax system.
3. Use federal dollars to complement, not replace, provincial child care spending and ensure that federal dollars are spent on regulated child care programs that set a benchmark for quality care in BC.

ⁱ Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2001, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto

ⁱⁱ Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2001, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto

ⁱⁱⁱ Where Are The Children? 2002, BC Child Care Advocacy Forum

^{iv} Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care, 2003

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ADVOCACY FORUM RESPONDS TO PROPOSED CHANGES TO SUPPORTED CHILD CARE PROGRAM October 2003

Recently, the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) released a Discussion Paper outlining proposed changes to Supported Child Care (SCC). The paper recommends replacing SCC with a new program, the Child Development Program. MCFD says that the new program is designed to be more focused on 'child development' than the current SCC program that supports the inclusion of children with special needs in child care programs chosen by their families.

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, a member organization of the Child Care Advocacy Forum, has published a detailed analysis of the proposed changes. (Go to http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/res/pdf/SCC_Refocus_Response.pdf)

The other organizational members of the Advocacy Forum concur with the Coalition's analysis that the proposed changes:

- are not supported by a clear rationale.
- are not supported by a comprehensive budgetary analysis.
- reflect a false separation between child care and child development.
- will further reduce access to quality, inclusive child care.
- will further entrench a two-tiered child care system.

Regrettably, the Advocacy Forum shares the Coalition's conclusion that the proposed changes will not lead to improved opportunities for social inclusion or increased access to quality, inclusive child care for all.

The Advocacy Forum therefore endorses the Coalition's recommendations that the provincial government:

1. Immediately restore provincial funding for licensed and regulated child care and children with special needs to 2001 levels.
2. Develop and implement a five year plan for a high quality, inclusive, comprehensive child care system that meets the needs of all BC children, including those with disabilities.
3. As part of this plan, provide SCC agencies across BC with sufficient resources to support the inclusion of children in a full range of regulated child care settings, and in a range of other community activities as chosen by their families.
4. End the dangerous separation between child care and early childhood development by ensuring that policy and program decisions are driven by a holistic approach to children and family needs.

MCFD is currently seeking feedback on the Discussion Paper. It is important that they hear a strong and consistent message about the problems with the proposed changes to SCC. The Forum encourages you to:

- ✓ endorse these recommendations
- ✓ send your comments and recommendations to the SCC Refocus Working Group. For Working Group Membership and contact information go to:

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/supported_childcare/refocus_working_group.htm

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BC Works if Child Care Works

Child care makes important contributions to society. This fact sheet provides information about the positive impact of professionally delivered, regulated child care – with a range of options – to the economy and labour force.

Here are some of the reasons why BC works better if child care works well.

- **Publicly funded, comprehensive child care creates opportunities for parents to engage in paid work and/or study.**

Knowing that their children are well cared for by qualified staff in high quality programs, parents are confident in their decision to use child care services and are better able to advance in their chosen careers.

With parents now paying \$1.35 BILLION for BC's child care services and government paying \$188 million, child care remains unaffordable for many parents – despite subsidy programs which are only available to parents with very low or no income. Meeting child care needs should not require a choice for parents between quality care and career or training commitments.

- **Regulated child care programs employ skilled, educated professionals who are committed to caring for our society's children.**

Thousands of jobs across this province are held by trained child care workers and managers. A properly funded, comprehensive child care system would ensure that qualified individuals who chose to care for infants and children were able to work in their field of choice, and receive reasonable wages and benefits for their vital work.

- **Publicly funded, comprehensive child care services create benefits for all of us, whether or not we have children and whether or not we use the services.**

In their publication *The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care: A Policy Study (1998)*, Cleveland and Krashinsky conclude that, if we offered child care to all Canadian children aged two to five, the immediate benefit to our economy would equal \$6,240,000. This includes greater employability for parents, higher income and taxes paid by parents, and savings to the social welfare system.

Down the road, there would be similar economic benefits projected for the children, because positive, nurturing environments in the first years of life are linked to academic and career success. In the long run, a comprehensive child care system would offer a \$2 return to children, parents and society for every dollar invested.

Of course, the bottom line for any child care system is that it works for the children it serves. If child care works well, children get the care and support they need to develop to their fullest potential. In future years, they will be able to help BC work to its fullest potential.

Child Care – The Place to Start

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CHILD CARE IN THE FEDERAL THRONE SPEECH GOOD NEWS OR NOT?

February 2004

On February 2, 2004 Paul Martin tabled his first Throne Speech as Canada's Prime Minister. The Speech outlined the issues that the federal Liberal Party will likely take into the federal election campaign expected later this year.

Once again, the Throne Speech promised action on child care...

"We must ensure that every child gets the best possible start in life;...

That is the goal. And there are important steps we can take now – down payments on an enduring commitment.

*First, in co-operation with the provinces and territories, the Government will accelerate initiatives under the existing Multilateral Framework for **Early Learning and Child Care, which means more quality child care more quickly.**"*

The Multilateral Framework was signed in 2003. Under the Framework, the federal government agreed to transfer \$935 million to provinces and territories for aboriginal child care (\$35 million) and for regulated early learning and child care programs for children under six (\$900 million).

The \$900 million was to be transferred over five years with \$25 million in 2003/04, \$75 million in 2004/05, and \$150 million, \$300 million and \$350 million in the third, fourth and fifth years respectively.

The Throne Speech suggests that the federal government will now allocate more of these funds in the first few years of the agreement.

A federal commitment to create 'more quality child care more quickly' is not to be taken lightly. Yet, before we can be sure if this 'accelerated' funding will mean real progress, we need to see proof in the upcoming federal budget that the Martin government will:

1. allocate enough money in years 2 and 3 to really make a difference.
2. commit sufficient federal funds over the long term to develop a publicly funded child care system that meets the needs of all of Canada's children from birth to twelve years of age.
3. require that, as a condition of receiving federal child care funds, provinces/territories use the funds to supplement rather than replace provincial/territorial spending on publicly funded, licensed and regulated child care systems.

Increased accountability **is essential in BC** where our government's use of federal funds for child care and early childhood development has been appallingly mismanaged! Government's own reports provide the proof...

Under the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Agreement, BC received \$39.9 million in 2001/02 and \$51 million in 2002/03 from the federal government for early childhood initiatives including child care.

The reasonable expectation was that the infusion of these federal funds would mean increased public investment in these aspects of early childhood development. So – what is BC's record?

When BC reported on its 'baseline' 2000/01 expenditures and its 2001/02 allocations, we were shocked to learn that BC **under spent** the first year federal allocation by over \$6 million.

We waited anxiously to learn how the 2002/03 funds were spent. Finally, BC's report for year 2 was posted at www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_childhood/pdf/eecd_annual02_03_final.pdf

The information in this report is even more shocking than we could have imagined!

While the federal government gave BC over \$90 million for Early Childhood Development including child care in the first 2 years of this ECD agreement, **BC spent \$18 million less on child care** in 2002/03 than in the baseline year of 2000/01.

It gets worse! Government's own report confirms that provincial spending specifically on the child care subsidy program, which serves low income families, was **down by \$23.6 million** in 2002/03. So, while the BC government remains under spent in its ECD allocations at the end of the first two years of the program, **the neediest children in our communities are WORSE OFF!**

Ignoring the \$23.6 million cut from child care subsidies, government says that it spent \$5.4 million of the federal ECD funds on child care in 2002/03. Clearly, **BC is using a small amount of federal funds to offset much bigger provincial funding cuts to child care.**

In 2003/04, BC received more federal funds through the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care. BC used its first year allocation of \$3.3 million to address wait lists in Supported Child Care. This year, BC expects to receive about \$10 million through this Framework. Again, \$3.3 million will go to the now renamed Supported Child Development Program. While we cannot get official confirmation, we expect that the rest is being used to replace some of the planned provincial funding cuts to Child Care Resource and Referral Programs. This Framework is the funding envelope that the federal Throne Speech promised to 'accelerate'.

We have not spent the last two decades urging the federal government to take a leadership role in funding child care only to have our provincial government misuse the funds this way. BC children, families and taxpayers deserve more. They deserve real accountability from their governments!

The Advocacy Forum is therefore calling on the provincial government to immediately:

- provide a full and complete accounting of all provincial cuts to child care expenditures.
- provide a full and complete accounting of how federal funds have been used to offset provincial cuts to child care.
- make a public commitment to stop all further cuts to child care funding.
- **table an expenditure plan for the next 3 fiscal years showing how funds received under the two federal transfer arrangements will be used to build a high quality child care system in BC.**

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March 2004

It is with dismay and alarm that the Child Care Advocacy Forum is releasing the attached information package that provides an analysis of the BC government's misuse of the federal funds it has received under the federal/provincial/territorial Early Childhood Development (ECD) Agreement.

For the last two years, the Advocacy Forum has raised concerns about the impact of provincial cuts on quality, affordable child care. Based on the experiences of families and caregivers across BC, we have reported on:

- ✓ the exodus of low and moderate income children from licensed child care because their families are not eligible for provincial child care subsidies;
- ✓ the closure of long standing child care centres and early childhood education training programs across the province;
- ✓ the erosion of caregiver wages and working conditions;
- ✓ the increased reliance on the unregulated sector to care for children.

And, we have repeatedly pointed out that BC is using federal early childhood funding to replace, rather than supplement, provincial spending on child care.

Yet, even we are shocked by the contents of BC's report on its 2002/03 ECD expenditures.

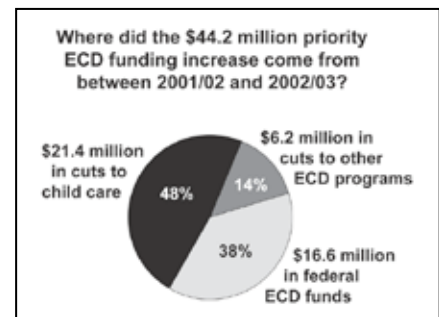
[www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_childhood/annual_reports.htm]

This public report, one of the few accountability measures required of provinces under the ECD Agreement, shows that the damage done to BC's child care system is even worse than we had imagined!

Government's own report shows that, in spite of having received \$50 million from the federal government in 2002/03 for early childhood, BC:

- ✗ **Cut \$23 million from child care subsidies** for low and moderate income families.
- ✗ **Used \$27.6 million taken from child care and other ECD programs** to increase spending on 'priority' programs such as research, community forums and grants to charitable organizations.
- ✗ **Funded 48 cents out of every increased \$1 spent on their priority ECD programs** in 2002/03 over 2001/02 from cuts to child care.

BC increased overall spending on its 'priority' ECD programs by a total of \$44.2 million in 2002/03 over 2001/02. While many programs that benefited from this increased spending are worthwhile – they **cannot be funded** at the expense of child care, which even this government calls a cornerstone of early childhood development.



Based on the attached analysis, it is clear that the accountability measures contained in the Early Childhood Development Agreement and related Early Learning and Child Care Initiative are inadequate. Regrettably, under the current terms of this Agreement, BC cannot be trusted to manage the federal funds.

The Advocacy Forum is therefore calling for a new federal/provincial/ territorial social framework that provides adequate stable federal funds for child care and holds receiving provinces and territories accountable for using these funds to develop and implement a publicly funded child care program that meets the needs of all children and families.

In the short term, the Advocacy Forum recommends that, as a condition of receiving federal ECD funds, the federal government require provinces and territories to:

- ✓ Maintain or increase their 2000/2001 baseline spending on child care and related early childhood development programs.
- ✓ Use federal funds to supplement rather than replace provincial spending.

Further, the Advocacy Forum calls on the provincial government to immediately:

- ✓ Restore provincial spending on child care to 2000/2001 levels.
- ✓ Use provincial and federal funding to develop and implement a five year plan for a publicly funded child care system in BC.

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BC's Annual Reporting on Early Childhood Development (ECD) – Analysis of Impacts on Child Care

**Prepared for the Child Care Advocacy Forum
by Lynell Anderson, B. Comm., C.G.A.**

March 2004

BC's Annual Reporting on Early Childhood Development (ECD) – Analysis of Impacts on Child Care

INTRODUCTION

In September 2000, the federal government, nine provinces and three territories signed the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Agreement under which they made a joint commitment to improve and expand early childhood development programs and services for children aged birth through six. Over the five years beginning in 2001/2002, the Government of Canada will provide \$291.5 million through this ECD Agreement for BC to invest in four priority action areas:

1. Promoting healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy;
2. Improving parenting and family supports;
3. Strengthening early childhood development, learning and care; and
4. Strengthening community supports.

Participating provincial and territorial governments agreed to prepare “public reports ... on the activities they have selected as priorities for investment”¹ in these action areas. Public reporting began in 2000/2001 with a baseline report detailing provincial expenditures in the four areas covered by the ECD Agreement before federal funds were available. To date, the BC government has released reports for the first two years (2001/2002 and 2002/2003) of expenditures under this agreement. All of these reports are available on the Ministry of Children and Family Development website at www.mcf.gov.bc.ca.

This analysis highlights government’s ECD reporting to date specifically as it relates to child care, which is generally considered to be the key component of priority action area 3 (early childhood development, learning and care). Further, given current unprecedented labour force participation rates of mothers of young children, significantly more young children participate in child care than any other early childhood program.

Appendix 1 of this analysis summarizes government’s ECD expenditures as reported for the baseline and following two years ending 2002/2003, along with the annual changes in spending. Part 1 of Appendix 1 shows expenditures on all ECD programs other than child care, and part 2 summarizes child care expenditures.

Appendix 2 of this analysis highlights the BC government’s ECD expenditures under year 2 (2002/2003) of the ECD Agreement as compared to year 1 (2001/2002). Part 1 of Appendix 2 again shows expenditures on ECD programs other than child care, separating those programs with increased spending in year 2 from those with spending reductions. The 3 funding sources for the programs with spending increases are identified and prorated across individual programs (or group of related programs).

¹ Annual Report on Early Childhood Development Activities – 2002/2003; Page 1.
http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_childhood/annual_reports.htm

THE ECD REPORTS – BC’S PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENT

There are two parts to government’s annual reporting:

1. written descriptions of the priority ECD investments, and
2. related spending summaries.

In regards to child care, and specifically in analyzing the BC government’s 2002/2003 report, these two parts tell two different stories.

The written description in BC’s 2002/2003 report describes child care as “a cornerstone of early childhood development”. Further, the report states that “the Government of British Columbia remains committed to achieving its New Era commitments to...target child care funding to help parents who need it most.” Finally, the report states that “new child care programs establish a foundation for the future that is based on sustainable, equitable and predictable funding.”²

The written description is followed by a statement indicating that the child care investment in 2002/2003 has increased by \$5.41 million over the annual baseline amount spent two years earlier.

However, the information contained in the related expenditure summaries on pages 20-22 of the same report stands in stark contrast to these statements.

First, government’s financial information, summarized in the attached Appendix 1, shows that some child care expenditures increased by a total of \$5.4 million in 2002/2003 as compared to the baseline year. However, the written part of government’s report fails to mention that the child care subsidy was reduced by \$23.6 million at the same time.

While federal ECD funds of \$50.2 million were utilized during this time period, the BC government actually reduced their spending on child care programs funded through the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services (MCAWS) and the Ministry of Human Resources (MHR) by a total of \$18.2 million. Government’s 2002/2003 spending report shows that the funds cut from child care were used to increase spending in other ECD programs and services beyond the funding provided by the federal government.

The child care cuts are even more significant when one compares the ECD expenditures in year 2 (2002/2003) with year 1 (2001/2002), as shown in the attached Appendix 2.

² Annual Report on Early Childhood Development Activities – 2002/2003; Page 7.
http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_childhood/annual_reports.htm

The current BC government was elected and began to implement its child care policy during year 1 of the ECD Agreement, starting in August 2001 with the repeal of the four year implementation plan for Child Care BC. However, the impacts of most of government's decisions did not start until year 2. Government spent \$33.6 million in federal ECD funds in total in year 1, with \$4.8 million of that amount spent on child care overall. Some year 1 expenditures reflect child care policies and budgets developed before the current government came to power.

Comparing year 2 to year 1 expenditures, government's reports document changes in ECD program spending that indicate their actual ECD priorities. The biggest spending increases between year 1 and year 2 were in autism (\$6.9 million), Aboriginal ECD (\$5.9 million), ECD Funds – United Way and Vancouver Foundation (\$5 million), ECD Research Initiatives – HELP (\$4.7 million), and ECD Community Forums and Initiatives (\$3.8 million).

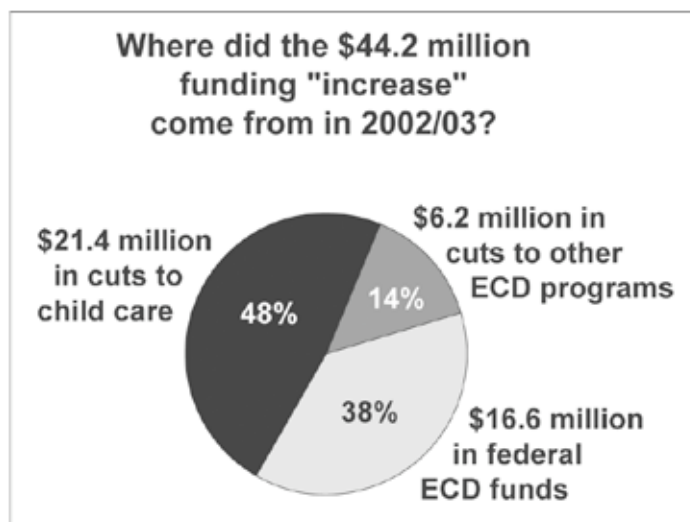
In total, spending on government's priority ECD programs increased by \$44.2 million from year 1 to year 2.

The increase in federal ECD funds utilized during the same time period was only \$16.6 million. How was the balance of ECD spending priorities of \$27.6 million funded?

Government's reports indicate that they funded the majority of their spending priorities through cuts to other ECD programs. Most of the cuts were made to child care programs funded through MCAWS/MHR (\$22.9 million overall), while the remainder came from other ECD programs such as early intervention therapies (\$2.5 million) and a range of family support programs.

As a result, government's own report demonstrates that the single biggest program contribution to government's ECD spending priorities in year 2 as compared to year 1 – bigger even than the increase in federal ECD funds – was the child care subsidy program, which is specifically targeted to low income families, those "parents who need it most".

This program was cut by \$22.3 million, reflecting a policy change introduced on April 1, 2002 whereby low-income families were required to earn lower incomes and to be employed or in training in order to qualify for child care subsidies.



CONCLUSION

Government's description of the value it places on child care is not consistent with the spending priorities outlined in its report. **While government purports to value child care as a cornerstone of early childhood development, 48 cents out of every increased \$1 spent on their priority ECD programs in year 2 as compared to year 1 under the ECD Agreement came from cuts to child care.**

It is also important to note that the ECD Agreement applies only to children under age six. This analysis of BC's ECD spending priorities, and the related cuts to child care, is understated because it does not include the spending reductions in child care subsidy and other child care programs related to school age care for children from 6 – 12 years of age.

THE MULTILATERAL FRAMEWORK – THE NEXT STEPS

In March 2003, federal, provincial and territorial governments agreed on a new initiative within the ECD Agreement called the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care. The BC government recently introduced its Baseline Report for 2002/2003 under this framework, which they call the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) initiative.

[www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca]

In the introduction to their report, the BC government states that “programs funded through the ELCC initiative are intended to provide direct care and early learning for children under age six, in child care centres, family child care homes and pre-schools. This funding is to be directed to regulated programs, which meet quality standards that are established and monitored by provincial/territorial governments.”

Federal funds through the ELCC will come to BC over a five year period (from 2003/2004 to 2007/2008) and will grow from \$3.3 million in the first year to approximately \$47.6 million in the fifth and final year, for a total of \$117.6 million.

While the first year under this initiative is not yet completed or reported on, the child care community understands that:

1. The \$3.3 million in 2003/2004 was utilized in the Ministry of Children and Family Development's (MCFD) supported child care program. At the same time, government spent much of 2003/2004 redesigning this program away from a sole focus on child care.

2. In 2004/2005, BC expected to receive \$10 million under this initiative. \$3.3 million will continue to be directed to MCFD's supported child care program, with the balance of \$6.7 million retained by MCAWS. Minister Coell confirmed in the budget (estimates) debates on March 11, 2004 that this \$6.7 million will be allocated as follows: \$2.7 million to child care subsidies and \$4.0 million to quality support services (presumably for child care resource and referral programs).
3. The 2004/05 federal budget, released on March 23, 2004, promises to accelerate federal spending under the ELCC. In 2004/05 and 2005/06, the federal government will spend an additional \$75 million per year through this initiative. Now, BC is likely to receive a total of about \$20 million through ELCC from the federal government in 2004/05.

Clearly, even with this additional funding, BC's planned use of the federal Multilateral funds will only partially offset both planned and actual provincial funding cuts to child care.

**Analysis of BC's Annual Reporting on Early Childhood Development Activities
Program Expenditure Summary (\$ 000's)**

Appendix 1

column #		1	2	3=2-1 Year 1 Increase (Decrease) over Baseline	4 Year 2 2002/03	5=4-2 Year 2 Increase (Dec) over Year 1	6=3+5 Year 2 Increase (Dec) over Baseline	7=3+6 Total Change in Spending over 2 years	
	Ministry	Baseline 2000/01	Year 1 2001/02						
Part 1 - ECD Programs other than Child Care									
*	ASD/Autism, EISS	MOHS/MCFD	236	9,034	8,798	15,980	6,946	15,744	24,542
	Aboriginal - ECD	MCFD	0	944	944	6,873	5,929	6,873	7,817
*	ECD Funds (United Way & Vancouver Foundation)	MCFD	0	5,000	5,000	10,000	5,000	10,000	15,000
	ECD Research Initiatives (HELP)	MCFD	0	500	500	5,225	4,725	5,225	5,725
*	ECD Community Forums & Initiatives	MCFD	0	0	0	3,810	3,810	3,810	3,810
	Childhood Immunization	MOHS	5,923	6,502	579	9,886	3,384	3,963	4,542
	Learning Initiatives	MCFD	1,112	1,630	518	3,839	2,209	2,727	3,245
	Building Blocks	MCFD	2,166	2,531	365	4,298	1,767	2,132	2,497
	Infant Development Program	MCFD	6,877	8,296	1,419	9,926	1,630	3,049	4,468
*	Nurseline/Health Guide/Parent Info Publications	MOHS	285	285	0	1,881	1,596	1,596	1,596
	Midwifery (note 1)	MOHS	3,064	3,064	0	4,595	1,531	1,531	1,531
*	Adoption/post adoption services	MCFD	2,157	3,954	1,797	5,317	1,363	3,160	4,957
*	PH Nursing/Speech, Audiology, dental, vision check	MOHS	69,019	69,030	11	70,316	1,286	1,297	1,308
	Family Resource Programs	MCFD/MAED	0	274	274	1,432	1,158	1,432	1,706
*	SN - supports (home, nursing, parent, respite, prof)	MCFD	6,813	7,587	774	8,464	877	1,651	2,425
	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder	MCFD	175	297	122	1,165	868	990	1,112
	Consultation for Complex Condition	MOHS	0	0	0	110	110	110	110
	Child and Youth Care Workers	MCFD	1,925	2,203	278	2,250	47	325	603
	Report error/rounding		0	-1	-1	9	10	9	8
*	Pregnancy Outreach/Nobody's Perfect	MOHS	2,866	2,866	0	2,866	0	0	0
	Total programs with equal or increased spending in year 2		102,618	123,996	21,378	168,242	44,246	65,624	87,002
	Early Intervention Therapies	MCFD	19,161	23,633	4,472	21,145	-2,488	1,984	6,456
*	Protective Family Support, Respite, home support	MCFD	13,936	16,425	2,489	14,729	-1,696	793	3,282
	Non-protective family support	MCFD	6,142	6,034	-108	4,945	-1,089	-1,197	-1,305
	Healthy Kids Dental & Optical	MHR	7,699	8,383	684	7,473	-910	-226	458
	At home program	MCFD	1,709	1,549	-160	1,522	-27	-187	-347
	Total programs with reduced spending in year 2		48,647	56,024	7,377	49,814	-6,210	1,167	8,544
	Total ECD Programs other than Child Care		151,265	180,020	28,755	218,056	38,036	66,791	95,546
Part 2 - Child Care									
	Child Care Subsidy-MCAWS/MHR	MCAWS/MHR	101,772	100,486	-1,286	78,209	-22,277	-23,563	-24,849
*	Child Care - other MCAWS	MCAWS	24,834	30,890	6,056	30,246	-644	5,412	11,468
	Total child care - MCAWS/MHR		126,606	131,376	4,770	108,455	-22,921	-18,151	-13,381
	Supported Child Care-MCFD	MCFD	19,877	19,929	52	21,410	1,481	1,533	1,585
	Total child care		146,483	151,305	4,822	129,865	-21,440	-16,618	-11,796
Grand total - all ECD Programs			297,748	331,325		347,921			
Total Federal ECD Funds Utilized (note 3)					33,577		16,596	50,173	83,750
	% of total spent on child care		49.2%	45.7%		37.3%			
	% of total spent on non-child care ECD		50.8%	54.3%		62.7%			
Grand total - all ECD Programs			100.0%	100.0%		100.0%			

* Programs which appear to be related have been grouped together, in order to summarize the information for this analysis

Notes:

1 Year 1 reported expenditures of \$328,261, but in the year 2 report the baseline (00/01) was increased by \$3,064 for midwifery. This analysis assumes yr 1 spending on midwifery was unchanged, therefore \$3,064 is added to the year 1 expenditures.

2 All annual expenditures, other than as noted in 1 above, are summarized from the BC ECD annual reporting available at www.mcf.gov.bc.ca.

3 Under the ECD Agreement, the federal government provided approximately \$39.4 million to BC in 2001/2002 (actual BC expenditures = \$33.6m), and \$52.5 million in 2002/2003 (actual BC expenditures = \$50.2m). In total, BC received \$91.9 million from the federal government in the first 2 years of the ECD Agreement, and utilized \$83.8 million, leaving \$8.1 million unspent.

**Analysis of BC's Annual Reporting on Early Childhood Development Activities
Program Expenditure Summary (\$ 000's)**

Appendix 2

		ECD Expenditures			Funding Source for ECD Increases			
Ministry	Year 1 2001/02 000's	Year 2 2002/03 000's	Increase (Decrease) 000's	%	Child Care 48%	Federal ECD \$ 38%	Cuts to Other ECD 14%	Total 100%
Part 1 - ECD programs other than child care								
* ASD/Autism, EISS	MOHS/MCFD	9,034	15,980	6,946	3,366	2,605	975	6,946
Aboriginal - ECD	MCFD	944	6,873	5,929	2,873	2,224	832	5,929
* ECD Funds (United Way & Vancouver Foundation)	MCFD	5,000	10,000	5,000	2,423	1,875	702	5,000
ECD Research Initiatives (HELP)	MCFD	500	5,225	4,725	2,290	1,772	663	4,725
* ECD Community Forums & Initiatives	MCFD	0	3,810	3,810	1,846	1,429	535	3,810
Childhood Immunization	MOHS/MCFD	6,502	9,886	3,384	1,640	1,269	475	3,384
Learning Initiatives	MCFD	1,630	3,839	2,209	1,070	829	310	2,209
Building Blocks	MCFD	2,531	4,298	1,767	856	663	248	1,767
Infant Development Program	MCFD	8,296	9,926	1,630	790	611	229	1,630
* Nurseline/Health Guide/Parent Info Publications	MOHS	285	1,881	1,596	773	599	224	1,596
Midwifery (note 1)	MOHS	3,064	4,595	1,531	742	574	215	1,531
* Adoption/post adoption services	MCFD	3,954	5,317	1,363	660	511	191	1,363
* PH Nursing/Speech, Audiology, dental, vision check	MOHS	69,030	70,316	1,286	623	482	181	1,286
Family Resource Programs	MCFD	274	1,432	1,158	561	434	163	1,158
* Total programs with increases < \$1million	MCFD/MAED	12,952	14,864	1,912	926	717	268	1,912
Total programs with equal or increased spending in year 2		123,996	168,242	44,246	21,440	16,595	6,211	44,246

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Ministry	Year 1 2001/02 000's	Year 2 2002/03 000's	Increase (Decrease) 000's	%	Child Care 48%	Federal ECD \$ 38%	Cuts to Other ECD 14%	Total 100%
Part 2 - Child Care								
Early Intervention Therapies	MCFD	23,633	21,145	-2,489				
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Non-protective family support	MCFD	6,034	4,945	-1,089				
Healthy Kids Dental & Optical	MHR	8,383	7,473	-910				
At home program	MCFD	1,549	1,522	-27				
Total programs with reduced spending in year 2		56,024	49,814	-6,211				
Total ECD Programs other than Child Care		180,020	218,056	38,035				

		ECD Expenditures			Funding Source for ECD Increases			
Ministry	Year 1 2001/02 000's	Year 2 2002/03 000's	Increase (Decrease) 000's	%	Child Care 48%	Federal ECD \$ 38%	Cuts to Other ECD 14%	Total 100%
Part 2 - Child Care								
Child Care Subsidy-MCAWS/MHR	MCAWS/MHR	100,486	78,209	-22,277				
* Child Care - All other MCAWS	MCAWS	30,890	30,246	-644				
Total child care - MCAWS/MHR		131,376	108,455	-22,921				
Supported Child Care-MCFD	MCFD	19,929	21,410	1,481				
Total child care		151,305	129,865	-21,440				
Grand total - all ECD Programs		331,325	347,921	16,595				
Total Increase in Federal ECD Funds Utilized				16,595				

* Programs which appear to be related have been grouped together, in order to summarize the information for this analysis

Notes:

1 Year 1 reported expenditures of \$328,261, but in the year 2 report the baseline (00/01) was increased by \$3,064 for midwifery. This analysis assumes yr 1 spending on midwifery was unchanged, therefore \$3,064 is added to the year 1 expenditures.

2 All annual expenditures, other than as noted in 1 above, are summarized from the BC ECD annual reporting available at www.mcf.gov.bc.ca.

Summary of Funding Sources:		(\$ Millions)
Cuts to child care		21.4
Cuts to other ECD programs		6.2
Total Funding Cuts		27.6
Federal ECD Agreement Funds		16.6
Total funding for priority ECD		44.2

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Participating Organizations:

BC Association of
Child Care Services

Coalition of Child Care
Advocates of BC

Early Childhood
Educators of BC

School Age Child Care
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**VANCOUVER
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MAY IS CHILD CARE MONTH

May 2004

The Child Care Advocacy Forum joins advocates, providers, families and communities across BC in marking May as Child Care Month.

Child Care Month is a time to:

- ✓ raise public awareness about the role that quality child care plays in building healthy and strong communities;
- ✓ honour the work of those who care for our children; and
- ✓ remind our elected leaders that they have a responsibility to ensure that ALL children and families in BC have access to quality, affordable care.

For over two decades, communities across BC have developed their own traditions to mark Child Care Month including municipal proclamations, picnics, parades and public education campaigns.

Sometimes, the province also acknowledges Child Care Month with posters, public announcements or events. This year, it looks as if those who are responsible for child care in BC have forgotten all about child care month. Perhaps this isn't surprising, given the harm their funding cuts have done to children, families and quality child care services.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum agrees that this year it is time for the child care community to reclaim child care month as our own.

We encourage our members and supporters to read and circulate the **"Toast to Our Community"** released by the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC at <http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/act/ccmonth.html>

All of the organizational members of the Child Care Advocacy Forum share and endorse the sentiment of the Toast.

We commend the families, caregivers and community organizations who continue to work 'on the ground' for quality care – despite government's failings.

For us, Child Care Month 2004 is a time to recommit ourselves to:

- ✓ holding on to our vision for a publicly funded child care system that meets the needs of all;
- ✓ working until we can celebrate the victory of our vision when together we achieve our goal!

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Structural Changes Won't Solve Political Problems May 2004

Recent media reports suggest that provincial responsibility for child care will soon move from the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services (MCAWS) to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). While government has not made an official announcement, senior bureaucrats in Victoria confirm that planning for the move is underway.

To understand what such a move might mean for advancing a quality, publicly funded child care system in BC, we need to look at recent history.

Since 2001, BC's provincial government has separated ministerial responsibility for 'child care' from ministerial responsibility for early childhood development (ECD) and other children's programs. While the Premier proudly points to the Minister of State for Early Childhood as proof of his government's commitment to young children, child care, a cornerstone of any effective early childhood development strategy has been left to languish in MCAWS far away from the ECD planning tables and funding envelope. From the start, it was clear that this approach was misguided.

So, if child care's move from MCAWS to MCFD means that government now understands that the false separation between child care and early childhood development was dysfunctional – we welcome the decision.

But, child care history in BC also teaches us that structural changes alone will not solve the problem. Over the last ten years, child care has been in at least 5 different ministries. When we look at the progress and setbacks over that period, it is clear that the key factor is not child care's organizational home. Rather, the key factor is the political will of the government of the day to build a quality, affordable system that meets the needs of all children and families.

So, if child care's move from MCAWS to MCFD is going to make a real difference, government needs to take meaningful steps to reverse the damage their funding cuts and policy changes have done to child care in BC.

As we have said so many times before – they need to:

- ✓ Restore provincial funding for child care to 2000/01 levels.
- ✓ Use dedicated federal funds for early childhood development and early learning and child care to supplement, rather than replace provincial spending.
- ✓ Develop and implement a five year plan that moves child care from the current user fee system to a publicly funded system.

These are the real solutions to the child care crisis in BC.

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Let's Vote
Child
Care!

June 2004

While Canadians are no longer waiting for a federal election call, Canada's children are still waiting for a child care system that meets their needs.

In the lead up to the June 28, 2004 federal election, the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum will be working with others across the country to:

- ✓ make child care a key issue in every riding.
- ✓ seek a political commitment for a publicly funded child care system that meets the needs of all of Canada's children.
- ✓ ensure that everyone who understands the importance of child care for our children, families and communities **votes child care**.

We hope that our election materials and those produced by our partners across Canada (see links below) will help YOU build the child care vote.

Why does the Federal Election Matter?

For over two decades, child care advocates in Canada have called for a child care system that meets the needs of all of Canada's children. Yet, in spite of conclusive research about the importance of the early years, Canada's investment in young children still lags behind other nations.

Recently, the federal government began to take some first steps. In 2000, the federal government signed the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Agreement with 9 provinces and 3 territories to improve and expand early childhood programs including child care. To date, BC has received over \$223 million through the ECD Agreement.

In 2003, the federal government committed an additional \$1 billion over 5 years specifically for child care through the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care. BC has received over \$23 million through this Framework with an additional \$114 million expected over the next 3 years.

Yet, in spite of these agreements, the child care situation in BC is worse, not better. In 2004/05 alone, BC's own child care spending will be about \$50 million less than in 2001/02. This is because the current agreements allow BC to cut its own funding for child care and do not hold BC accountable for spending designated funds to build a publicly funded child care system.

So, while the federal government has taken some important first steps, the experience in BC proves that we need a federal government that will do more and will ensure that more is done for child care in BC.

What are we asking for?

We are seeking a commitment from all political parties that, if elected, they will:

1. Develop and implement a five to ten year plan for a publicly funded child care system that entitles all of Canada's children access to quality child care.
2. Commit sufficient federal funds to build a child care system that meets the needs of all. Over ten years, the goal should be to invest at least 1% of Canada's Gross Domestic Product on child care, as recommended by the European Union.
3. Require that provinces and territories restore child care funding cuts, maintain or increase their own spending on licensed child care and use designated funds to build a publicly funded child care system as a condition for receiving federal funds.

What can you do?

1. Register to Vote

You are entitled to vote in the federal election if you are a Canadian citizen and will be 18 or older on election day. Contact Elections Canada at www.elections.ca or at 1-800-463-6868 to make sure you are registered to vote.

2. Make Child Care an issue in your riding

Make sure that every candidate in your riding knows that you and others will **vote child care**.

Phone or visit your candidates, ask about child care if they knock on your door, attend 'all candidates' meetings and ask a child care question, write letters to the editor, call talk shows and answer polls about the issues that matter to voters.

Here are some questions to ask...

If elected, are you committed to building a publicly funded child care system for Canada's children?

What concrete steps will you and your party take over the next five years to achieve this goal?

3. Vote CHILD CARE on June 28

Let's show politicians that we are a political force that can make a difference.

Let's vote for people who will advance our child care vision.

Let's encourage everyone else who cares about child care to get out and vote too.

For more child care related election resources and tools, check the following websites regularly

www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum

www.firstcall.org

www.cccabc.bc.ca

www.childcareadvocacy.ca

www.parentvoices.ca

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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Status of Women Canada
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VANCOUVER
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BC Child Care Deficit Grows But there are solutions...

June 2004

In March 2004, the Child Care Advocacy Forum released an analysis of the BC government's use of federal Early Childhood funds. The Analysis showed that, in spite of receiving \$50 million in 2002/03 from the federal government to improve early childhood services, actual spending on child care in BC went down. (See www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum/pdf/CCAF_ECDanalysis.pdf)

A recent analysis done for a YWCA Canada project, completes the picture of "Public Funding for Child Care In BC" and clarifies both actual provincial and potential federal funding for child care. (See www.cccabc.bc.ca/res/pdf/YWCA_PublicFundingCC.pdf)

Based on the information that is now available in the attached document, the Child Care Advocacy Forum has reached the following conclusions.

1. Provincial child care spending

Table 1 (page 1) summarizes child care spending in BC from 2000/01 to the current fiscal year of 2004/05 and outlines the amount that BC spent on or budgeted for child care **from its own revenues**.

The numbers clearly show that provincial spending on child care (not including Supported Child Care) has decreased by \$42 million - from a high of \$198 million in 2001/02 to a low of \$156 million budgeted this year.

For over two years, the Advocacy Forum has called on the provincial government to restore the funding cuts to child care. These figures make it clear that funding levels need to be restored to 2001/02 levels - a minimum provincial commitment of \$198 million.

2. Federal child care funding to BC

Table 2 (page 3) outlines the federal funds that the provincial government has in this current year to spend on child care and other early childhood programs. **A total of \$94 million** is available through the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Agreement and the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning & Child Care and unspent ECD funds from two earlier years.

These figures show the additional federal funds that BC could spend on child care if they followed community advice and allocated 2/3 of the ECD funds on child care and used all of the funds under the Multilateral Framework on regulated child care, as they are required to do. Using this approach, BC has an **additional \$69 million** to spend on child care in 2004/05 of which they have only committed \$7 million to child care.

As Table 3 (page 4) highlights, if BC had maintained its 2001/02 child care budget and used the new federal funds appropriately, **the child care budget this year would be \$267 million. Sadly, the 2004/05 budget falls \$104 million short of this goal.**

Solutions to the child care deficit are not complicated.

- ✓ Restore provincial child care funding to a 2001/02 level of \$198 million.
- ✓ Use \$69 million from the two federal transfer agreements to supplement rather than replace provincial child care spending.
- ✓ Develop and implement a five year plan that moves child care from a user fee system to a publicly funded one.

The Advocacy Forum will continue to work towards these goals.

Public Funding for Child Care in BC June 2004

Various statements about public funding for child care in BC have led to confusion in the community. In spite of significant increases in federal funding for early childhood development (ECD), advocates, researchers and other community members identify almost \$50 million in cuts to provincial funding for child care. However, the Minister currently responsible for child care in BC has publicly stated that his government is spending virtually the same amount on child care as the previous government did¹.

In light of these apparent contradictions, the objectives of this document are to:

1. Summarize public funding for child care in BC for the relevant prior years (2000/01 and 2001/02) and compare this information to the current year's budget (2004/05).
2. Share information about federal funding available for ECD, including child care, and options for consideration about increasing public funding for child care in BC.

Public Funding Summary

While parents pay most of the costs of child care in BC, there are two main sources of public funding for child care:

1. **BC's contribution** – currently, the province's own contribution to child care, other than Supported Child Care², flows through the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services.
2. **Federal funds** – two funding streams for children under age 6³:
 - **ECD Agreement** provides BC with \$419 million for ECD, including child care, over 7 years (2001/02 through 2007/08).
 - **Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care (MLF)** provides BC with \$137 million specifically to improve access to affordable, quality provincially regulated early learning and child care services over 5 years (2003/04 through 2007/08).

The following Table 1 summarizes, and the subsequent notes highlight, public funding for child care in BC over the relevant years:

Table 1	Note	Baseline 2000/01	Inc (Dec)	Year 1 2001/02	Inc (Dec)	Year 4 2004/05
BC's Contribution	2	166	32	198	-42	156
Share of Federal Funds	4,5	0	5	5	2	7
Total Public Funding		166	37	203	-40	163

Baseline Year – 2000/01

- ECD Agreement signed; federal funds not yet available; BC's ECD community develops consensus that province should allocate 2/3 of new federal funds to child care and 1/3 to other ECD programs and services.
- BC's own contribution to child care, and therefore total budget, is \$166 million

Year 1 - The Transition Year – 2001/02

The previous NDP government transitioned to the current Liberal government in June 2001:

- ECD Agreement provides \$39.4 million to BC³; province allocates \$5 million to child care for young children
- BC's own contribution to child care increases by \$32 million, primarily reflecting the low cost child care program for school age children implemented by the previous government.

Year 2 through Year 4 – Cuts to Child Care – 2002/03 through 2004/05

- In year 2, ECD Agreement provides \$52.5 million to BC³; province allocates none to child care.
- Province begins cuts to its contribution to child care; some cuts provide increased funds for other ECD areas. For example, BC's funding of the child care subsidy program for low income families with children under age 6 is reduced by almost \$23 million. This reduction more than offset the \$5 million increase in child care funding for young children reported in year 1, and the savings generated from cutting child care subsidies helped to fund other ECD programs⁵.
- BC's contribution to child care further reduced because families of school age children also had their subsidies cut and the low-cost school age child care program was phased out.
- By year 4, funds available through both federal funding streams increased to \$94 million (see Table 2), of which BC confirms \$7 million included in the budget for the province's child care Ministry (see Table 1).
- With the cuts to child care now apparently complete, BC's own contribution under the current year's budget is \$156 million, reflecting total provincial funding cuts to date of \$42 million or 21% (not including supported child care).

Clarifying the Contradictions

Ministry staff confirm that Minister Coell is comparing the current year to the baseline year (2000/01) when he states that BC's child care funding is essentially unchanged from the level of the previous government. By including \$7 million in federal funding in this year's budget, Ministry staff point out that the result (\$163 million) is only slightly less than the 2000/01 funding of \$166 million (Table 1).

However, Table 1 also shows that the previous government increased provincial funding for child care during year 1 (2001/02), their last year in office and the year of transition to the current government. By the end of year 1, both governments had shared in overseeing an increase in provincial funding for child care of \$32 million.

In expressing their concern about the cuts to child care, community members are comparing the current year to year 1. When first announced, these cuts totaled over \$50 million, but the announced cuts to Supported Child Care and Child Care Resource and Referral programs were not fully implemented². As a result, the overall reduction in provincial funding for child care is now a minimum of \$42 million, plus the final reductions in the provincial contribution to Supported Child Care. Community members advocate that all of these provincial funding cuts should be restored.

Further, community members expected that the progressive increases in federal ECD funding over the last 4 years would result in corresponding increases in public funding for child care in BC. To date, the federal government has provided almost \$250 million in total to BC through the 2 ECD funding agreements³. Of this \$250 million, the province added \$7 million to the provincial child care Ministry’s budget in 2004/05, partially offsetting the \$42 million in provincial cuts to date.⁴

Funding Options for Consideration

In order to increase public funding for child care in BC, one option is to seek further increases in funds from the federal government. This option is being strongly pursued by advocates and other community members across Canada, and in fact was at least partly responsible for a recent increase to the MLF funding.

However, there is widespread community concern about using federal funds to replace provincial cuts, rather than increasing public funding to improve access to quality, affordable child care. As a result, community members are seeking restoration of the cuts to the province’s funding for child care as an important first step.

With provincial funding restored, another option is to allocate a larger portion of BC’s share of the existing federal funding to child care. As noted previously, the total federal funding available for child care under the two federal agreements in 2004/05 is \$94 million, of which \$7 million has been confirmed in the child care Ministry’s budget.

Since child care is considered a cornerstone of early childhood development by governments, academics, and community members, how much of these federal funds should the province allocate to child care? There are a number of options to consider. For example, if we applied the initial community consensus of 2/3 ECD funding to child care, Table 2 shows that federal funding could total \$62 million (Option 1). Or, 2/3 of the ECD Agreement funds plus 100% of the child care-specific MLF funds could be allocated to child care, for total federal funding of \$69 million (Option 2).

Table 2	Note	Total ECD	Option 1	Option 2
ECD Agreement - 2004/05	3	66	44	44
Unspent ECD Agreement funds from 01/02 & 02/03	5	8	5	5
Multilateral Framework (MLF)	3	20	13	20
Total Federal Funding		94	62	69

Given that there are now other ECD programs and services whose budgets rely on funding under the ECD Agreement, there are concerns about damaging these programs in order to address the cuts to and underfunding of child care. As the ECD Roundtable of First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition recently stated “we do not advocate that one service area be enhanced at the expense of another.”⁶ To offset these concerns, the province could consider increasing its own investment in child care, particularly now that we understand the BC economy has improved.

Table 3 shows how BC’s public funding for child care in 2004/05 could look if the provincial contribution was restored to 2001/02 levels and supplemented by an amount equivalent to a substantial allocation of the federal ECD funds:

Table 3 – 2004/05	Option 1	Option 2
BC’s Contribution to Child Care	156	156
Step1 - Restore the Provincial Cuts	42	42
Step 2 - Supplement with Federal Funds	62	69
Possible Revised 2004/05 Budget	260	267
Current 2004/05 Budget	163	163
Increase in Public Funding	97	104

Lynell Anderson, B. Comm., C.G.A.
 Community Coordinator, YWCA Canada
Building a Community Architecture for Child Care Project

Notes:

1. As reported in the Times Colonist, April 30, 2004
2. While Supported Child Care (SCC) is integral to child care, planning and budgeting for SCC is currently in a different Ministry (MCFD). SCC funding history not available, but MCFD staff confirm that the announced cuts were not fully implemented. Unless otherwise noted, all of the figures in this document relate to child care funding within the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services (MCAWS). MCAWS also confirmed that the budget cuts for Child Care Resource and Referral, originally announced at 100% for 2004/05, were not fully implemented. 2000/01 and 2004/05 figures from Ministry staff; 2001/02 from the report “Early childhood education and care in Canada, 2001”, www.childcarecanada.org.
3. Government of Canada, www.fin.gc.ca/fedprov/ecde.html, “Federal Support for Early Childhood Development and Early Learning and Child Care”.
4. The provincial cuts initiated in 2002/03 more than offset the increased funding in 2001/02, and the cuts continued through 2004/05. As a result, it is clear that the ECD Agreement has not provided any funds to BC’s child care Ministry to date. MLF agreement introduced in 2003/04 and all of the funds received in that year (\$3 million) allocated to SCC. Of \$20 million MLF funds for 2004/05 Ministry staff confirm \$3m to SCC and \$7m to child care Ministry budget. No information on plan for remaining \$10m.
5. Government’s annual reporting under the ECD Agreement available at http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_childhood/annual_reports.htm. Also see “BC’s Annual Reporting on ECD – Analysis of Impacts on Child Care” (http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum/pdf/CCAF_ECDanalysis.pdf). This analysis assumes the unspent federal funds from 2001/02 and 2002/03 were not spent in 2003/04. As the ECD spending report for 2003/04 is not yet available, the extent of possible underspending in that year is unknown and has not been included in this analysis.
6. May 21, 2004 letter to Premier Campbell.

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**VANCOUVER
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Post-Election Update Child Care is on the Federal Agenda! July, 2004

What do the Federal Election Results mean for Child Care?

As the dust settles from the federal election, it is clear that we have a unique opportunity to make real progress on our child care agenda.

During the election, the federal Liberals promised a Canada wide child care program based on the principles of quality, universality, affordability and developmentally appropriate programs. They also promised to increase federal funding by \$5 billion over 5 years. Since the election, Prime Minister Martin continues to say that child care is a top priority of his government.

However, since the Liberals only won enough seats to form a minority government, they will need the support of MPs from other parties to act.

The federal NDP identifies child care as one of their top electoral commitments and their leader, Jack Layton, continues to publicly affirm his party's commitment to child care. The Bloc Quebecois supports Quebec's publicly funded, universally accessible child care system and wants a fair share of federal funds for this system.

If these two parties make action on child care a condition of their support for the Liberal Minority government – there will be sufficient political consensus to make child care the first new social program in decades.

Who Are the Key Players?

On July 20th, Paul Martin appointed the Honourable Ken Dryden as the Minister of Social Development – with responsibility for developing a national child care program. (Yes, the very same Hockey Hall of Fame legend Ken Dryden.) Minister Dryden says that he is up to the challenge.

Jack Layton appointed Tony Martin as the NDP critic for child care. Mr. Martin, a former Ontario provincial politician, has a track record of action on child welfare and anti-poverty issues, including unwavering support for regulated child care. He says he is keen to get active on the child care file as soon as possible.

What Can You Do?

Given the history of broken federal promises on child care, we cannot take anything for granted. The first federal Throne Speech is set for October 5, 2004. Let's make sure child care is front and centre in government's plans. Here's what you can do:

- ✓ Support the Keep The Promise Campaign initiated by the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. (CCAAC) at www.childcareadvocacy.ca/action/promises.html
- ✓ Contact your federal Member of Parliament, especially the new ones, to make sure they know that child care matters to you. (MP and Ministers email addresses are available at http://canada.gc.ca/directories/direct_e.html)
- ✓ Email the Minister of Social Development, the Honourable Ken Dryden and tell him that you are counting on him to make the Liberal election promises a reality.
- ✓ Check the CCAAC website at www.childcareadvocacy.ca regularly for new federal campaigns.

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\$4.9 Million for Child Care Encouraging but Far Short of the Need August, 2004

On July 27, Minister Christy Clark, the minister now responsible for child care in BC, announced \$4.9 million in 'increased' child care spending.

Minister Clark says these funds are part of the federal/provincial Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care and will be spent as follows:

- \$1.7 million to help children of low income parents who are not in the paid labour force attend pre-school.
- \$435,000 in capital funds to support some of the costs of developing 200 new spaces in 8 projects.
- \$1 million in capital funds to assist with the costs of expanding, maintaining and repairing existing child care facilities.
- \$700,000 to be reinstated to enhance funding for Child Care Resource and Referral programs.
- \$1.1 million to supplement operating funds for school age care.

The Advocacy Forum is encouraged that the province is now talking about spending rather than cutting funds for child care. After three years of denial, the province is finally acknowledging that their cuts to child care have limited access to quality care for thousands of children. These children and their families have paid the price for government's "difficult decisions" and have lost their only chance for a community-based quality early childhood experience.

This small reinvestment in child care will be welcome news for some families and child care services. Given the challenges that low and moderate income families face in accessing quality care, every little bit helps.

However, the announced \$4.9 million and related spending priorities do not come close to restoring the provincial cuts to child care or to repairing the damage done to children, families and BC's child care services over the last 3 years.

As the provincial election nears and federal child care funds flow to BC, we expect more child care spending announcements in the coming months.

The Advocacy Forum will continue to call for:

- **adequate provincial financial reinvestments in child care.**
- **spending priorities that move us towards a publicly funded system that entitles all children access to quality child care programs.**

Regrettably, on both of these criteria, the recent announcement falls short of the need. Here's why:

1. Federal funds are still used to offset provincial cuts.

Since 2001/02, the province has cut \$42 million from its annual child care budget¹. Over the same period, BC received close to \$250 million¹ in total from the federal government for early childhood development and child care. Until the latest announcement, only \$6.7 million¹ of these federal funds were committed to child care.

Yet, of this \$4.9 million in child care spending, Ministry staff confirm that \$2.5 million is not new funding. Capital funding of \$435,000 was already in this year's approved child care budget. The additional \$1 million in capital and the \$1.1 million for school age care will both come from reallocations within this approved budget, which we are told has been significantly under spent in each of the last three fiscal years. Given the tremendous unmet needs, this under spending is shocking.

So, of the \$4.9 million announced on July 27th, **only \$2.4 million represents 'new' money for child care** - the \$1.7 million for subsidies for pre-school and the \$700,000 for Child Care Resource and Referral Programs. The province has approximately \$94 million¹ in federal funding this year through the two federal/provincial agreements which could be used for early childhood development, including child care. This recent announcement means that child care's share of these funds will only increase from \$6.7 million to \$9.1 million in BC, as summarized in the following table.

2004/05 Child Care Funding in BC <i>not including Supported Child Care</i>	Original Budget¹ <i>\$ millions</i>	Impact of July 27, 2004 Announcement <i>\$ millions</i>
BC's Funding	156	156
BC's Allocation of Federal Funding	7	9
Total Child Care Funding in BC	163	165

BC is still not reinvesting provincial dollars in child care and is using a small portion of available federal funds to offset some of the worst impacts of the provincial cuts.

2. Subsidies and unlicensed care will not build a quality system.

For the most part, the \$4.9 million will be spent in ways that are not tied to a clear vision or to a plan for a publicly funded, high quality, accessible child care system.

Pre-school subsidies for children of low income parents who are not in the paid labour force are not new. This reverses one of the province's most ill-conceived decisions to eliminate a \$107 monthly subsidy that was available to help these children attend pre-schools. Eliminating this subsidy has meant that thousands of children lost out on a quality, community-based early childhood experience and many pre-schools closed their doors.

While this reversal is long overdue, the fact is that families will only benefit if pre-schools exist in their neighbourhoods and if the pre-school fees match the subsidy a parent receives. If not, even the poorest parents will have to pay the difference between the subsidy and the actual cost of pre-school fees.

This is just one reason why subsidies are not the way to fund a quality child care system. The subsidy system is based on the premise that government's role is to help low income parents compete with more affluent parents to pay for child care. Child care providers set their own fees. Their operating budgets and financial stability depend on whether there are enough

families in their community who can afford the fees, and trained caregivers willing to work for the wages providers can pay. Programs serving lower income families are particularly vulnerable and struggle to generate enough fee revenue to cover the costs of delivering quality care.

Under these circumstances, affluent families are always at an advantage. Given their ability to pay more than the subsidy rate and the chronic shortage of licensed spaces in BC, their children can access the higher cost spaces, which are more likely to be of higher quality. Low and moderate income families, including those who receive subsidies, are left with little choice but to piece together informal, unlicensed and often unstable care.

The tragic irony is that while the subsidy system purports to target limited public dollars for those most in need, what we really have is a situation where children most likely to benefit from quality care, because of economic or social risks, are least likely to access it. After 30 years, it is crystal clear that a targeted subsidy system cannot fix these fundamental problems

This highlights a second major concern about government's child care spending priorities – the increasing reliance on unlicensed care for the majority of BC's children. The supply of licensed child care spaces in BC accommodates only 12% of the children. As a result, families have to use informal and unlicensed care. This situation has been exacerbated by a policy in BC that provides child care subsidies for unlicensed care. Unlicensed care in BC is cheaper and over half of BC's subsidy budget is spent on this type of care even though there is no public accountability for the quality of care provided.

Yet, the research is clear that quality matters. For all children, quality child care promotes healthy development while poor quality care does not. This is true for all families, whether low, middle or high income. The research is also clear that factors associated with quality include licensing, caregiver training and compensation, and stability of caregiver/child relationships. All of these factors are left to chance in unlicensed care.

This is where the recent announcement about additional funding for Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) Programs is relevant. CCRRs developed in the 1990s with a mandate to provide parents with information about child care in their region and to support child care providers in the community. Over time, CCRRs became the face and voice of child care in many communities. In 2001, the province announced that funding for CCRRs would end as of April 1, 2004. Again, after strong community advocacy, the decision was reversed, albeit with a reduced overall budget. While the total CCRR budget is still inadequate, more federal funds will now go to CCRRs.

However, government now expects CCRRs to increasingly focus on recruitment and support of the unlicensed sector with reduced services and support for licensed child care. The government's rationale for this approach is that since most children are in unlicensed care, CCRRs should support "parental choices".

But again, the evidence clearly indicates that when parents can access affordable, licensed family and centre care, they 'choose it'. In the current context, the 'use' of unlicensed care cannot be confused with a real choice. Real parental choice requires a range of affordable, accessible, quality options.

Government's spending priorities for the \$4.9 million continue to rely on strategies that will not build a quality child care system.

3. There is a way to move forward.

To achieve system wide goals, BC needs operating funding provided directly to licensed child care centres and family child care providers. This funding program requires three essential elements:

- Funding levels that substantially cover the actual costs of providing quality care.
- Funding that is stable and not subject to change as a result of normal fluctuations in enrolment.
- Accountability measures to ensure public funds are used to achieve the goals of affordable parent fees, adequate and fair compensation for caregivers and high quality care for all.

A direct operating funding program based on these elements is the way to move forward.

In the recent announcement, only the increased funds for school age care will go into direct operating funds. Unfortunately, the \$1.1 million is woefully inadequate and will only provide an increase of 25 - 50 cents a day per school-aged child. These funds will be delivered through the Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF).

CCOF, the program through which the province provides operating funds to licensed family and group child care programs, is not based on the 3 essential elements above. CCOF payments are based on enrolment. Fully enrolled programs serving families who can afford to pay current fees get more public funding than programs with vacancies where families can't afford to pay the fees. There are no requirements that CCOF dollars be used to limit parent fees, provide adequate wages or promote quality. CCOF is entrenching a two-tiered child care system.

Minster Clark says that her recent announcement is one step of many that her government will take over the next few months to improve early childhood and child care programs.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum therefore continues to urge Minister Clark and her government to take the following actions:

- **Restore provincial funds cut from child care.**
- **Use federal funds to supplement rather than replace provincial cuts.**
- **Implement and adequately fund an accountable direct operating funding program as the first step in developing a five year plan for a publicly funded child care system that entitles all BC children access to quality child care programs.**

NOTES

¹ See www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum/pdf/AdvForum_CCDeficit.pdf for detailed analysis of these figures.

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**VANCOUVER
FOUNDATION**

Submission to the BC Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services Pre-Budget Consultation

October, 2004

INTRODUCTION

The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum is an alliance of 6 provincial child care organizations that brings together over 4,000 individuals, groups and service providers in BC. Since 1999, the Advocacy Forum has worked to advance a "Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care Services in BC". (http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum/common_agenda.html)

The work of the Advocacy Forum is based on the accumulated evidence of over three decades of research. This growing body of research affirms the need for a comprehensive child care system in BC; the benefits of public investment in quality child care for children, families, and society at large; and the degree to which our province and country are lagging behind other developed societies in addressing this issue.

Based on this, the Advocacy Forum works for a child care system in BC that, amongst other things:

- ✓ Entitles all children to access quality child care programs regardless of their families' economic or employment status.
- ✓ Provides families with choices from a range of coordinated, quality, licensed, and regulated child care programs.
- ✓ Is publicly funded through the tax system and is affordable for all families who want or need to use it.
- ✓ Is complemented by a comprehensive family policy that includes extended parental leave and progressive family/work policies.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Over the last 3 years, the Advocacy Forum has shared with government and the public our growing concerns about the negative impact of provincial funding cuts and policy changes on access to quality child care in BC.

Public reports show that annual provincial funding for child care (not including Supported Child Care) has decreased by \$42 million - from a high of \$198 million in 2001/02 to a low of \$156 million in 2004/05¹.

These cuts have had devastating impacts on children, families and child care programs. Some of the most troubling impacts include:

- Thousands of families have lost all or part of their provincial child care subsidy and were left with no choice but to withdraw their children from quality care.
- Many programs, particularly those serving lower income communities, closed their doors and others struggle to stay open with reduced revenues. In many cases, the only option for programs has been to increase fees.

- A two-tiered system was entrenched through the Child Care Operating Funding program, which provides public funds to child care programs based on enrolment only. As a result, fully enrolled programs serving neighbourhoods where families can afford to pay full fees receive more funds than programs in lower income communities where there are vacancies because families cannot afford to pay.
- Many early childhood educators have had their already low wages further reduced and Early Childhood Education training programs in communities have closed making access to training even harder to come by.
- One Stop Access programs which helped families access the provincial child care subsidy system were eliminated. Access to the subsidy program has been centralized through Regional Service Centres, making it even more difficult for families to access the program, particularly those in remote areas or whose first language is not English.
- Child Care Resource and Referral Programs, which support parents and caregivers across BC, have had their budgets significantly reduced with resulting service reductions.

These devastating cuts have occurred in spite of the fact that, over the last four years, BC has received close to \$250 million from the federal government for child care and early childhood¹.

This year alone, BC has approximately \$94 million dollars available through federal transfer payments that could be invested in child care and other early childhood programs¹. Had the government followed community advice and allocated 2/3 of the federal funds it receives through the Early Childhood Development Agreement to child care and all of the funds it receives under the Multilateral Framework to regulated child care – as it is required to do – BC would have an additional \$69 million to invest directly into child care¹. Regrettably, only \$9 million has been allocated to the child care budget to date.²

In fact, had BC followed the Advocacy Forum's previous advice to this Committee, by restoring provincial child care funding to 2001/02 levels and using federal funds as suggested, the total child care budget this year could be \$267 million. Sadly, the 2004/05 budget is only \$165 million², falling \$102 million short of this goal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The pre-budget Consultation Paper projects a significant provincial surplus and asks British Columbians how it can best be spent. Our recommendations are based on our first hand knowledge of the price that young children, families and child care providers in BC have paid to date.

We therefore recommend that the provincial 2005/06 budget:

1. Restore provincial child care funding to the 2001/02 level of \$198 million.
2. Use federal early childhood development and child care transfer funds to supplement, rather than replace provincial funds, with a goal of a combined annual child care budget from federal and provincial sources of \$267 million.
3. Use any additional federal funds that may come to BC as a result of commitments made during the June 2004 election to further build the child care system.
4. Develop a five year implementation plan that moves child care from a user fee system to a publicly funded one.

References:

¹"Public Funding for Child Care in BC", L. Anderson, YWCA Canada, June, 2004.

²"\$4.9 Million for Child Care ...", Child Care Advocacy Forum, August, 2004.

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Child Care in the News November 2004

In the summer of 2004, the new federal government reaffirmed its election promise to build a national child care system. This fall, a series of reports and events have kept child care and federal/provincial developments in the news.

1. Oct. 25, 2004 - the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) releases a comprehensive report on the troubling state of Canada's child care services.
2. Nov. 2, 2004 - the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC) releases "From Patchwork to Framework: A Child Care Strategy for Canada" outlining a 15-year plan for a child care system.
3. Nov. 3, 2004 - the federal/provincial/territorial ministers responsible for child care agree to move forwards with a national system of early learning and child care based on 4 principles of quality, universally inclusive, accessible and developmental child care.
4. Nov. 9, 2004 - the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council releases "Working for Change: Canada's Child Care Workforce", a comprehensive review of the regulated child care workforce.
5. Nov. 12-14, 2004 - over 600 delegates attend the "Child Care for A Change! *Shaping the 21st Century*" conference in Winnipeg, the first such conference in over 20 years.

Given the speed with which events are unfolding, the Advocacy Forum has chosen to focus on the cumulative messages about the problem, the solutions, governments' responses and our child care advocacy agenda.

The Problem

All of the reports issued this fall confirm what the child care community has been saying for a long time.

The **OECD** report is particularly noteworthy because it comes from Canada's trading partners and compares Canada's approach to young children with what is done in other countries with comparable levels of development.

The OECD describes the fragmented, poorly funded and marginalized state of child care services in most of Canada today. The report highlights the lack of growth in the system over the last decade (other than in Quebec); a general stagnation in quality (despite some high quality programs); low levels of public investment; excessive parental contributions; inefficient subsidy systems and problems associated with the separation of child care from early childhood. The report concludes that Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada "seems insufficient, inconsistent and underfunded."

BC was one of 4 provinces visited by the OECD team who affirmed that that the number of licensed child care spaces in BC still falls far short of the need. While noting some high quality programs, such as Langara Child Development Centre,

the OECD Team “was concerned in British Columbia by the apparent lack of coordination, by a failure to establish early childhood education and care as *the* mainstream services for children and families (through which special needs and vulnerable children could be served in an inclusive way) and the fragmentation of a relatively small budget among so many different groups and services.” (The OECD Report is available at <http://www11.sdc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/socpol/publications/reports/2004-002623/english.pdf>)

The **CCAAC** highlights and describes 5 reasons for the current patchwork of child care services – poorly resourced and vulnerable services; an artificial distinction between child care and child development resulting in ‘anything but child care’ policies; continued ambivalence about the role of mothers in the paid labour force; and the absence of a public policy framework. (The CCAAC’s report is available at http://www.childcareadvocacy.ca/resources/pdf/framework_cc.pdf)

The **Child Care Human Resources Sector Council** report focuses on those who work in the regulated child care sector and examines recruitment, retention and recognition issues over the last 6 years. The Sector Council’s media release about the report states that “wages and working conditions are so poor in many licensed child care settings that staff are taking their child development expertise elsewhere. Staff turnover has long plagued the child care sector but ... the situation has never been worse. Ironically, the recent influx of federal funding for early childhood initiatives has contributed to the problem. Many provinces have by-passed child care to use their federal funds to develop health and education programs for young children where early childhood educators can apply their training with less hassle and for more money.” (The Sector Council report is available at <http://www.ccsc-cssge.ca/english/pdf/workingforchange/CCHRSC%20MAIN-e.pdf>)

Regrettably none of this is news for child care advocates, parents or providers. Yet, these reports individually and collectively paint a picture that should make our politicians ashamed!

With a reported federal budget surplus of close to \$9 billion and a projected provincial budget surplus of over \$1 billion – there is no excuse for inaction.

The Solutions - Perhaps the ‘real news’ is that all of these reports recommend very similar things:

The **OECD** recommends:

1. A coherent vision for a publicly funded, universal system of early childhood learning and care.
2. A significant increase in public investment (funding) for child care delivered through supply side mechanisms (that is funding directly to services rather than through subsidies to parents).
3. Considerable effort to support and sustain quality.

The **CCAAC** provides a detailed 15 year strategy built around 3 main recommendations:

1. Enacting legislation with supporting agreements outlining service entitlement, standards, quality enhancements, and accountability and leadership responsibilities.
2. Establishing a schedule for federal funding to reach 1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2020 outlining goals and timelines for funding and service provision in 5-year increments over a 15-year period. (The report includes a detailed 15 year roll out.)
3. Supporting parents to balance work and family responsibilities by enhancing maternity/parental benefits and family responsibility leaves.

The **Child Care Sector Council** identifies 4 key policy areas that must be addressed:

1. A general policy framework that clearly recognizes the central role of child care to ECD strategies.
2. Coherent public policies across the sector to effectively manage the demand for child care and early childhood development educators.
3. Sufficient funding of the sector.
4. Labour market information to guide decision making.

The Report also makes specific recommendations for addressing challenges in the regulated child care sector including increased pay and benefits; increased attachment to professional, labour and advocacy organizations; and reframing the 'child care' versus 'early child development' dialogue.

The "**Child Care For A Change! *Shaping the 21st Century***" Conference was not designed to make specific recommendations. Yet, the consistency in the evidence and experience shared by presenters and participants was note worthy. Marcel Lauziere, President of the CCSD, the organization that sponsored the Conference, said in an Open Letter to the Prime Minister, "It (the evidence and experience) points clearly to a publicly financed system – available and affordable by all families (like Quebec's \$7 a-day system) – as the way forward." At the Conference, the need to base a new child care system on the best, rather than on the failings of the old, was echoed consistently. (Conference proceedings will be available at <http://www.ccsd.ca/home.htm>)

Each of these reports contain recommendations that go beyond the "Common Vision and Agenda" endorsed by the six member organizations of the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum.

Yet, for us, the main lessons are clear:

- ✓ The research confirms and affirms the positions we have taken.
- ✓ For most of Canada's children, including those in BC, the situation has not gotten better.
- ✓ There are solutions. Other countries are doing it and so can we.

Government's Response

During the last federal election, the federal Liberal party made child care a top priority. They promised to build a national child care system based on four principles – Quality, Universality, Accessibility, and Developmental programming (QUAD); to enshrine these principles in legislation and to provide \$5 billion over 5 years to provinces and territories to begin to build the system.

The Prime Minister named Ken Dryden as the new federal Minister for Social Development with responsibility for delivering on this promise. On Nov. 1 and 2, Minister Dryden met with provincial and territorial ministers responsible for child care to begin working on an agreement around child care. At the end of these meetings, ministers released a joint communiqué that provides the first indication of where federal/provincial/territorial discussions are headed. [Quebec did not sign the communiqué.] (See the full communiqué at http://www.scics.gc.ca/cinfo04/830828004_e.html).

The communiqué states that the federal, provincial and territorial governments (excluding Quebec) "agree on shared principles to guide the development of a new national system of early learning and child care." These guiding principles are Quality, Universally Inclusive (which replaced universality), Accessible and Developmental. The ministers state they will "build on the success of the 2003 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care,..." and will meet again in January 2005 to finalize an agreement so that funds can be available in the 2005-06 fiscal year.

On Nov. 15, BC's Minister of Children and Family Development, Stan Hagen, issued a media release reaffirming his support for the four principles of quality, universally inclusive, accessible and developmental child care and will use any new federal funds to support his government's current approach to child care. "Most notably, the agreed-upon principles respond to B.C.'s commitment to choice and flexibility for families, and to targeting families most in need, while ensuring our approach is fiscally responsible and sustainable." (See Hagen's statement at http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/nrm_news_releases/2004MCF0029-000966.pdf)

Our Advocacy Agenda

We are at a critical moment in Canada's child care history. If we get the building blocks right, we may well be on our way to building a child care system we can all be proud of. But, if we get the fundamentals wrong, another generation of children and families will pay the price.

While we are encouraged that the ministers feel they made progress, the communiqué and media release indicate that they have a lot of work ahead of them to 'get it right'. Here's why.

1. The Advocacy Forum has repeatedly **called on the federal government to hold provinces accountable for the child care funds they receive**. Federal funds should be tied to provincial multiyear plans, with timelines and targets, for building a publicly funded child care system and should be used to supplement, not replace, provincial spending.

As a result, we are concerned that the ministers point to "the success of the 2003 Federal-Provincial-Territorial (F/P/T) Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care." In BC, existing federal/provincial agreements have **not** been successful. BC made significant cuts to its own child care funding and used federal funds to replace some of these cuts. In spite of having received almost \$250 million in the last 4 years under two F/P/T agreements for ECD and child care, child care in BC is worse off. A new federal/provincial agreement must ensure this cannot happen again.

2. The Advocacy Forum has repeatedly called on our provincial government **to develop and implement a five-year plan for moving away from the current user fee/subsidy system to a publicly funded, quality system for children from birth to twelve years of age**.

As a result, we are concerned that Minister Hagen is likely to spend new federal funds much as his government has to date. This approach is not supported by the evidence that demonstrates the need for coherent public policies, the integration of child care and early development; adequate, stable public funding and serious attention to quality.

3. The Advocacy Forum is working for a child care system that **entitles all children access to quality child care programs**.

As a result, we are confused by the decision to replace the principle of 'universality' with 'universally inclusive'. We fully support inclusive child care that meets the needs of children with a full range of abilities but expect Minister Dryden to keep his promise to build a system that works for **all**.

When Ministers Dryden and Hagen meet again in January, they need to build a system that:

- ✓ Moves away from the current user fee/subsidy patchwork to a publicly funded system.
- ✓ Ties federal funds to provincial plans for building a high quality, publicly funded system.
- ✓ Entitles all children access to quality child care and early childhood programs regardless of their families' income or employment status.

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BC's Child Care Spending Where Are We Going?

December, 2004

This fall, the BC government announced it will 'reinvest' in child care funding. The news comes after 3 years of funding cuts totaling \$42 million in 2004/05 alone.

Our understanding of the information available to date is as follows:

- The BC government announced **\$33 million** in child care funding for the remainder of this fiscal year (2004/05) and the next fiscal year (2005/06).
- Close to \$28 million of this amount will go into the **child care subsidy program**. As of January 1, 2005:
 - Families who earn \$200 a month over the current income threshold will be eligible for a subsidy. This is a net increase of \$15 over the 2001 income threshold level.
 - Income thresholds for families with children who have special needs will rise by an additional \$100 and their supplement will increase to \$150 from \$107.
 - There are new subsidy categories and rates for licensed family child care providers and License-Not-Required (LNR) family child care providers who register with Child Care Resource and Referral Programs. Rates for unregistered LNRs will not increase.
 - Maximum subsidy rates for most other forms of care will increase. The biggest increases are for Pre-schools, for care of Kindergarten children in School Age programs, and for care provided by licensed family and registered LNR caregivers.
 - For the first time, the maximum subsidy rate for 3-5 year olds in licensed family and registered LNR care is higher (\$415 a month) than for the same care in a licensed group program (\$394 a month). This differential reflects an increase of \$26 a month for group care and \$61 for licensed family or registered LNR care.
 - Student loans will no longer be counted as income when calculating subsidies.
- \$4.45 million has gone into a **one-time payment to providers who currently receive the Child Care Operating Fund**. This funding is based on a 'per licensed space' rate established for each type of care. Government describes the payment as a transition to new subsidy rates which is intended to assist in the operation of the child care facility.
- \$500,000 will go to a **professional development fund** for which no details are available.

Initially, the Advocacy Forum saw government's spending plans as a crisis response to the crisis created by previous cuts which left thousands of BC families with no choice but to remove their children from licensed care and led to the closure of too many quality child care programs across BC.

While the evidence is increasingly clear that subsidies are **not** the way to fund a stable, quality child care system, we know that for low and moderate income families – every penny counts.

But as the details of government's spending plans emerge, our concern grows. Here's why:

1. **Growing reliance on informal and unlicensed care** – Recent announcements confirm fears that provincial child care policy is explicitly promoting the use of unlicensed care. Requiring LNRs to register with Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) programs in order to receive a higher subsidy rate does not ensure quality, stability or accountability for public funds. Registration and training requirements are minimal and are already being undermined as government encourages under resourced CCRRs to take short cuts to get LNRs on the list as quickly as possible.

The research is clear that quality matters and that staff training, staff stability and licensing standards promote quality. Yet, BC's approach flies in the face of this evidence and further undermines training. Why would someone complete 1 or 2 years of post secondary training in Early Childhood Education if parents can receive a higher subsidy rate for care where caregivers are only required to complete 20 hours of training over 2 years?

Government may claim that they are focusing on LNRs because this is the care 'parents choose'. But in the current environment where there is a chronic shortage of licensed spaces and those that do exist are too expensive for most families, current usage patterns cannot be mistaken for 'real choice'. The evidence in BC and elsewhere is clear, when families can afford licensed care, they choose it. While registered LNRs have a role to play, they are not the cornerstone on which to build quality.

2. **Lack of financial clarity** – When government announced this spending, Minister Hagen said that half of it would come from federal funds. Since then, the Advocacy Forum has been unable to receive detailed answers to 3 basic financial questions.

- How much of the \$33 million will be spent this year and how much next year?
- Specifically, how much of the \$33 million is coming from federal transfer funds and how much from provincial funds?
- Of the provincial funds, how much is an actual increase to the child care budget and how much is a reallocation of existing under-spent funds in the child care budget?

It is very troubling that government announced multi-million dollar expenditures without answers to these questions. Until this information is available, we do not know whether the \$33 million is an actual 'reinvestment' or whether federal funds are being used to replace provincial spending cuts – leaving children and families no better off than before the federal government transferred \$250 million to BC.

3. **There is still no long-term plan** – Recent announcements are still ad hoc responses. The Advocacy Forum has repeatedly called on the province to develop a five year plan for moving to a publicly funded child care system that entitles all of BC's children access to quality child care programs. The need for such a plan is even more critical now that the federal/provincial/territorial discussions are underway on a national system of early learning and child care. Only with a clear provincial vision and a plan for getting there can there be adequate accountability for new federal funds that are likely to come to BC.

But there are solutions that can work! We encourage Minister Hagen to:

- Restore provincial funds cut from child care to 2001/02 levels.
- Use federal funds to supplement rather than replace provincial cuts.
- Invest most public spending on child care in direct operating funding with accountability tied to affordable parent fees, adequate wages and benefits and quality.

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PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL 2005 BUDGETS What do they mean for Child Care?

In February, 2005 the BC government and the federal government released their 2005/06 budgets. From these budgets, we should be able to see how much money each level of government plans to spend on child care and their child care policy directions.

If we take the headlines at face value, the budgets should include good news for child care. Both levels of government have surpluses. The province heard in its pre-budget consultations that British Columbians want the surplus reinvested in social programs. And, the federal budget provides Paul Martin with his first opportunity to deliver on his election promises. However, behind the rhetoric and buried numbers – another reality emerges.

The Provincial Budget

The February 15, 2005 provincial budget places a lot of emphasis on anticipated federal child care initiatives. The document reconfirms that BC has agreed on four principles to guide its use of the promised \$5 billion federal investment in a national system of early learning and child care – Quality, Universally Inclusive, Accessible and Developmental. Three additional BC principles that are “consistent with British Columbia’s vision for a sustainable child care system in which families can choose from a range of affordable, safe, quality child care options that meet diverse needs” are also named – Choice/Flexibility, Targeted Investment and Integrated Services.

Given that the BC budget was presented before confirmation of the federal budget and BC’s share of the new \$5 billion federal investment in a national child care system, these funds were not included in the budget. Rather, the budget says that the BC government will table a supplemental estimate once this amount is known. Fair enough.

But, the budget should tell us how much of its own funds BC will spend on child care and how much of the \$95 million in federal funds already committed to early childhood in BC will be allocated to child care.

Sadly, the budget is still not clear about this and finding the facts takes some work. The starting place is the Ministry for Children and Family Development’s (MCFD) Service Plan which combines Early Childhood Development, Child Care and Supports to Children with Special Needs in the same budget line. This makes it impossible to know how much will actually be spent on child care programs and whether or not 2005/06 spending reflects an increase in provincial spending.

Senior MCFD staff have since confirmed that the 2004/05 (this year) child care program spending estimates were revised from \$163 million up to \$171 million. This \$8 million increase reflects BC’s share of the Early Learning and Child Care federal transfer fund that was upwardly adjusted by \$10 million mid year. This means there has been **no** increase in provincial child care spending in 2004/05.

The provincial budget for 2005/06 (the coming year) estimates that BC will spend \$183 million on child care, an increase of \$12 million over the 2004/05 revised estimates. \$10 million of this increase will come from the existing Early Learning and Child Care federal transfer, with only an increase of \$2 million in provincial spending.

As the chart below indicates, provincial spending next year will still be \$40 million less than it was in 2001/02 and, even with \$25 million in committed federal funds, **total** child care spending will be \$20 million less than in 2001/02.

	Funding Reported for 2001/02 (millions)	Original Approved Budget 2004/05	Revised Estimates for 2004/05	Proposed Budget for 2005/06
BC's Contribution	198	156	156	158
Allocation of Federal Funds	5	7	15	25
Total BC Child Care Funding	203	163	171	183

What about BC's policy directions? Although BC has expressed commitment to principles as outlined above, the only other indication of government's child care plans can be found in the MCFD Performance Measures. The first performance measure commits MCFD to increasing 'regulated' child care spaces by 1500 in 2005/06. It is important to note the change from measuring 'licensed' spaces to measuring 'regulated' spaces. This is a strong indication of this government's increasing reliance on the unlicensed sector. The second child care performance measure establishes a target for the number of families who will receive child care subsidies. The 2005/06 targets **only equals** the number of families who received provincial child care subsidies in 2001/02.

So, after 4 years, government can only hope that next year access to child care subsidies will be back to where it started before they made significant provincial cuts. Previous performance measures of the number of funded child care services providers, and the percentage of eligible centre and family-based providers receiving provincial funds, will now only be tracked internally with no public accountability.

Good news? Regrettably – not yet!

The Federal Budget

Families, caregivers and child care advocates had high hopes for the federal budget. After all, the minority federal Liberal Government came to power promising that this time, they would deliver a national child care system. In addition to the funds they already transfer to provinces and territories for early childhood development, including child care, they promised to transfer another \$5 billion over 5 years to start building the system and gave Minister Ken Dryden the task of delivering on the promise. Minister Dryden was eager and convened two meetings with his provincial and territorial counterparts prior to the federal budget to reach an agreement on Canada's first new social program in decades. So, what happened?

Well, the February federal budget did include a five year plan for transferring the promised \$5 billion in federal support for what is now called an Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Initiative as outlined below.

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	TOTAL
ELCC Initiative (in millions)	200	500	700	1,200	1,200	1,200	5,000

From these funds, \$100 million is allocated for First Nations on-reserve child care and another \$100 million will go to support improved research and the development of common indicators and benchmarks. But does this deliver on the federal government's child care promise?

Again, not yet and here's why:

The first \$700 million (2004-05 and 2005-06) is going into a 'third-party trust' that provinces and territories will be able to draw upon, on a per capita basis, until March 31, 2006. BC's share will be about \$91 million. The federal budget says that this mechanism will be used "while a framework for quality programs and services across the country is developed".

Third party trusts are often used by the federal government to clear funds that it wants to allocate for certain purposes from its books before the end of a fiscal year. While a third party trust may be a way to set funds aside, it is not the way to build a child care system. As a review of BC's child care spending over the last 4 years clearly demonstrates, simply transferring funds for child care to the province without requiring that it be used to build a quality child care system does not work.

That is why thousands of BC families and advocates told Minister Dryden that he had our strong support for reaching an agreement this time that ensured:

- ✓ Federal funds would supplement, rather than replace, provincial spending on child care.
- ✓ Federal funds would enhance access to quality, licensed and regulated child care.
- ✓ The province would be held accountable for building a publicly funded child care system that entitles all of BC's children access to quality child care services.

We supported BC's Minister, Stan Hagen, in calling for a federal commitment beyond \$5 billion over five years so that the province would have sustained federal funds to help build the child care system that BC children and families need and deserve.

On these counts – the federal budget falls fall short of the hope and promise.

What Now?

Both the federal and provincial budgets make it clear that we all still have a lot of work to do.

Here are our priorities:

1. We will continue to advocate for a federal/provincial/territorial agreement that creates a child care system based on principles, entitles all children from birth to 12 years of age access to quality child care services and holds governments accountable for using federal funds to build and sustain quality services for children and families.
2. We will continue to call for full restoration of provincial child care funding to 2001/02 levels and for a long term child care plan that moves us away from the current patchwork of user fee services to an integrated, quality, publicly funded child care system.
3. We will work to ensure that every candidate in the next provincial election to be held on May 17, 2005 understands that "BC works if child care works" and makes a commitment to a clear and accountable plan for building the child care system children and families need.

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BC WORKS IF CHILD CARE WORKS Provincial Election 2005

Fact Sheet #1 - Keeping Our Eyes on the Prize

On May 17, 2005 British Columbians will go to the polls to elect our next provincial government. In the lead up to the election, the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum will develop election tools to help YOU:

- ✓ make child care a key election issue in your riding.
- ✓ secure a commitment from those seeking office to a publicly funded child care system that meets the needs of BC children and families.
- ✓ ensure that everyone who understands the importance of child care for our children, families and communities **gets out to vote**.

While there are a host of immediate child care issues facing children, families and caregivers – **elections are a time to focus on the big picture**. Elections are a time to affirm our long-term vision for child care and to ensure that those seeking our votes share this vision and have a plan for moving it forward. A time to keep our eyes on the prize!

To get us started, this Fact Sheet outlines the Advocacy Forum's agenda for meeting the child care needs of BC's children from birth to 12 years of age and addresses five common misconceptions about our position. This will give you the facts you need to advance a child care advocacy agenda.

Our 7 Point Agenda

The Advocacy Forum's Agenda for child care in BC is supported by a solid body of research that demonstrates the need to move from the current patchwork of user fee services to an integrated publicly funded child care system. We advocate for a child care system that:

1. Entitles all children access to quality child care and early childhood programs, regardless of their families' economic or employment status.
2. Honours and respects the diversity of BC's children, families and communities and is inclusive of all children and families.
3. Provides families with choices from a range of coordinated, quality, licensed and regulated child care programs.
4. Is publicly funded through the tax system and affordable for all families who need or want it.
5. Provides caregivers with training opportunities, wages, benefits and working conditions that are commensurate with their education, experience and responsibilities.
6. Meets and exceeds standards that are associated with quality and positive childhood development.
7. Is complemented by a comprehensive family policy that includes extended parental leave and progressive family/work policies.

Five Misconceptions About Our Agenda

From time to time misconceptions about our position emerge in the media, government or the community. As we begin our pre-election work, we want to address some of these misconceptions so that future discussions can be based on the facts.

1. *Some say that we don't really believe in parental choice.*

Not so. We support families' right to decide if, when and how their children participate in child care and early childhood programs. But, real choice only has meaning if there are real options. The 'choices' families make today are not necessarily the choices they would make if and when they have quality, affordable, accessible options. Our goal is to make sure that a range of such options are there for families when and if they want or need them.

2. *Some say that we only support public funding for centre-based child care.*

Not so. We support publicly funded full and part-time programs in centre, family and in-home settings. Research indicates that quality care promotes positive childhood outcomes. As a result, we believe that publicly funded child care services should be licensed, regulated and accountable for using public funds to promote quality and affordability – regardless of where the child care service is delivered.

3. *Some say that we don't support stay-at-home parents.*

Not so. Child care is a central piece – but not the only piece – of a comprehensive family policy. That is why we support extended parental leave, family friendly workplaces and full access to services for children whether or not their parents are in the paid labour force. Yet, even with well developed family policies, leaving paid employment will never be a choice or option for the vast majority of working parents. Supports for children of stay-at-home parents can therefore complement, but will never replace, the need for publicly funded child care.

4. *Some say that because we support entitlement for all children, our position doesn't adequately address those most in need.*

Not so. We believe that the only effective way to meet children's and families' needs is by funding quality, stable services that are accessible to all with additional resources provided to meet the needs of those who face particular barriers or challenges. Just like public schools, libraries or parks, this approach builds communities and avoids the stigmatization, instability and exclusion associated with 'targetted' programs like BC's current child care subsidy program.

5. *Some say that our position makes it easy for parents to avoid their responsibility by placing their children in the care of 'strangers'.*

Not so. Families will always be their children's primary caregivers but children and families have never functioned in isolation of the wider community. Throughout history, extended families, villages, cultural and faith groups and social networks have played a key role in supporting families in their parenting role. Today, child care programs play this role for many families. The families and caregivers in quality child care are not strangers – they are friends to rejoice with over children's progress, shoulders to cry on when times are tough and the circle to draw on for parenting advice and wisdom. Families who have been lucky enough to find quality child care know that child care builds community. Surely, this should be more than a matter of luck.

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Early Childhood
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School Age Child Care
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Westcoast Child Care
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BC WORKS IF CHILD CARE WORKS Provincial Election 2005

Fact Sheet #2 - Child Care Builds Community

On May 17, British Columbians go to the polls to elect a new provincial government. After 4 years of devastating cuts to child care, this election is critical for BC children, families and care providers. If we are to turn the child care tide, every voter must understand **that BC will only work if child care works**. Here's why:

1. Publicly funded child care makes it possible for parents, particularly mothers, to work and/or study.

The contribution that mothers of young children make to our economy remains a key economic driver for public investment in child care. In 2003, 67.4% of BC mothers whose youngest child was under 2, 73.5% of BC mothers whose youngest child was 3-5 and 78.7% of BC mothers whose youngest child was 6-15 were in the paid labour force. Mothers need and choose to work and the economy would stagnate without them. For labour force participation to be productive and sustainable, families need to know that their children are well cared for by qualified staff in high quality programs. Yet, this kind of care is still not accessible or affordable for most BC families. Families should not have to choose between quality care and career or training opportunities.

2. Quality child care programs employ skilled, educated professionals who are committed to caring for society's children.

Thousands of jobs across BC are held by trained child care workers and directors. Yet, current low wages and limited career options have led to serious recruitment and retention problems. A properly funded, comprehensive child care system would ensure that qualified individuals are able to work in their field of choice and receive reasonable wages and benefits for their vital work. In fact, child care can and will stimulate local economies as wages earned by those who build and those who deliver child care are most likely to be spent close to home.

3. Publicly funded, quality child care benefits all of us, whether or not we have children and whether or not we use the services.

A 1998 cost-benefit analysis of providing child care to all Canadian children aged two to five calculated an immediate benefit to our economy of \$6,240,000 through increased parental employment, higher income and taxes paid by families and savings to the social welfare system. In the long run, the analysis indicated that a comprehensive child care system would offer a \$2 return on every public dollar we spend. (Cleveland and Krashinsky). Child care for children from birth to 12 years of age is an investment in our future, not an economic drain.

4. Child care builds community.

Quality child care brings together children from all cultures, levels of abilities and kinds of families. Through daily experiences in quality programs, children learn that they belong. They learn to value diversity, to respect differences and to solve problems peacefully. Child care is also the place where families connect with each other, build support networks and develop life long friendships. For isolated families, these connections are essential. Watch your own reaction to a group of young children playing in the park – the smiles, the friendly chats, the sense of wonderment. Isn't this the kind of community we all want to be part of?

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BC WORKS IF CHILD CARE WORKS Provincial Election 2005 - Fact Sheet #3 School Age Care - The Forgotten Service

On May 17, British Columbians go to the polls to elect a new provincial government. After 4 years of devastating cuts to child care, this election is critical for BC children, families and child care providers. **Quality school age child care** has been particularly hard hit and requires focused advocacy during the election campaign. Here's why:

- ✓ In 2001, the new BC government began to phase out the Funding Assistance Program (FAP) under which 15,000 licensed school age child care spaces were available to BC families for \$7 a day.
- ✓ As funding for these spaces was withdrawn, fees increased and many families had no choice but to withdraw their children from licensed school age care. Significant cuts to subsidy eligibility made the situation even worse for low- and moderate-income families.
- ✓ The provincial government replaced previous funding mechanisms with the Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF). CCOF is based on enrolment. Programs who lost children because families couldn't afford to pay higher fees receive less than programs that are full, often because they serve higher income communities.
- ✓ Federal transfer payments to BC since 2001 are dedicated to 'early childhood development' – for children from birth to 5 years of age. School age care (other than for Kindergarten children) wasn't eligible for even the small amount of federal funds BC allocated to child care.

As a result of these policies, the situation for school age children and the group and family providers who care for them worsened. A growing number of young children are on their own before and after school, and closures of BC school age programs continue to this day.

But the need has not gone away!

- ✓ In 2003, 209,500 BC children between the ages of 6 and 12 had mothers in the paid labour force. These children require before and after school care on regular school days and full-day care for up to 13 weeks of annual school closures.
- ✓ Yet, in 2002/03, there were only 23,089 spaces in licensed group programs and about 5000 spaces in licensed family child care homes for school age children.
- ✓ Quality school age child care supports children's development, builds children's sense of belonging in the community and helps prepare them to make a positive transition into adolescence.

Quality school age care needs to be adequately funded and part of the plan to move us away from a user fee system to a publicly funded child care system.

Ask your candidates what they will do to support quality school age care in your community.

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BC WORKS IF CHILD CARE WORKS Provincial Election 2005

Fact Sheet #4 - What YOU Can Do

On May 17, British Columbians go to the polls to elect a new provincial government. Here's what YOU can do about child care during the campaign:

Get Out an Informed Child Care Vote

Everyone who understands the importance of child care for our children, families and communities needs to **get out to vote on May 17**. YOU can:

- ✓ Make sure that parents, co-workers and friends are registered to vote. For information see: Elections BC at www.elections.bc.ca or download, copy and distribute the BC Parent Voices voter information at www.cccabc.bc.ca/act/bcvotes/BCPV_voting2.pdf.
- ✓ Make a personal commitment to take 5 people who care about child care, but don't usually vote, to the polls on May 17.

Make Child Care An Issue In Your Riding

Every candidate needs to know that your vote, and the vote of others, depends on their party's child care record and platform. YOU can:

- ✓ Copy and distribute information on child care from the Advocacy Forum and others by following the links at www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum/articles.html
- ✓ Display a Child Care Window Sign and encourage others to do so. Choose your favorites at www.cccabc.bc.ca/act/bcvotes/bcpv_windowsigns.html
- ✓ Ask your candidates where their party stands on child care when they knock on your door or call on the phone. If they don't contact you, make an appointment to see them or write/fax them asking for a written response.
- ✓ Write letters to the editor and call talk shows to feature local child care issues.

Secure A Commitment to A Publicly Funded Child Care System

After 4 years of devastating cuts to provincial funding of child care, it's time that voters and candidates heard some solutions. YOU can attend All Candidates' meetings and ask:

- Will your party restore provincial child care funding cuts and, if so, by how much? (The 'right answer' is YES. Restoring provincial funding to 2001 levels will require reinvesting \$40 million that the province cut from its own child care funding.)
- How will your party use federal transfer funds for quality, publicly funded child care? (The 'right answer is that a fair share of existing transfer funds and ALL of the new, promised federal funds will be used to help build a publicly funded child care system.)
- What is your party's plan to build a publicly funded child care system in BC? (The 'right' answer includes elements of the Advocacy Forum's 7- point Agenda for Child Care in our Election Fact Sheet #1 at www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum/pdf/forum_facsheet1.pdf or our Common Vision and Agenda at www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum)

**Let's use the election campaign to hold the
politicians accountable on child care!**

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Federal/Provincial Action on Child Care What's New and What's Next?

June 2005

Since the last federal election in June 2004, media reports suggest that Canada now has a national child care system. Many believe that child care has received \$5 billion in federal funds and that the job is done. But, the reality on the ground for families, children and caregivers is quite different.

What's New?

Here's an update on events to date:

1. During the June 2004 federal election, the federal Liberal Party promised to create a national child care system based on the principles of **Quality, Universality, Accessibility and Developmental (QUAD)** and to allocate an additional \$5 billion over the next 5 years to start building the system. They were elected to govern in a minority parliament and Ken Dryden became the federal minister responsible for child care.
2. In November 2004, Minister Dryden met with provincial/territorial ministers responsible for child care. They reached an agreement in principle to move forward on a child care system. At this meeting, the principle of Universality was changed to Universally Inclusive.
3. In February 2005, the federal/provincial/territorial ministers met again but were unable to conclude a multilateral agreement.
4. Later in February 2005, the federal government tabled a proposed 2005/06 budget that laid out a 5 year spending plan for the promised \$5 billion. The first year's payment of \$700 million was to be made available to provinces and territories through to March 31, 2006.
5. The federal government began negotiating individual Agreements-in-Principle with provinces that were prepared to move forward on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC). Bi-lateral agreements were signed with Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia. These agreements rely on promised federal funding commitments over five years and were used to help build support for the federal budget.
6. In June 2005, Parliament approved the federal budget including the child care funding. Assuming the minority government continues, the \$700 million promised for this year should now be available to provinces and territories.
7. To date, BC has **not** signed an Agreement with the federal government and **no new** federal funds for Early Learning and Child Care have come to BC. However, prior to and during the recent provincial election, the BC Liberals indicated that an Agreement with the federal government was imminent.

The 5 existing Early Learning and Child Care Agreements-in-Principle give us some idea about what a BC/Canada Agreement might include. Read on...

What's In the Agreements?

All 5 Agreements contain some common elements including:

- ✓ A joint commitment to the 4 QUAD principles, revised to reflect 'universally inclusive'.
- ✓ A provincial commitment to make progress on two objectives – improving the quality and developmental component of early learning and child care programs and improving access to early learning and child care that is universally inclusive.
- ✓ A provincial commitment to spend federal funds on regulated child care for children under 6.
- ✓ A provincial commitment to develop, with community input, Action Plans that will be used to negotiate detailed multi-year funding agreements beyond 2005/06.
- ✓ A provincial commitment to include indicators of availability of spaces, affordability of spaces and improvements in quality in public reporting on existing federal/provincial agreements.
- ✓ Commitments to work together on research, knowledge and information.

Each Agreement also includes some distinct elements. For example:

- ✓ Agreements with Manitoba and Ontario reference existing provincial plans and include more details about how federal funding will be spent than do other agreements.
- ✓ Agreements include specific language on services for First Nations/Aboriginal/Francophone communities.
- ✓ Some Agreements require provincial Action Plans to demonstrate that federal funds will not displace existing provincial child care funding. Others do not.

(To view existing ELCC Agreements go to www.sdc.gc.ca/en/cs/comm/sd/news/agreements_principle/index.shtml.)

What's Next for BC?

Now that the provincial election is over, we expect BC to sign an Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care with the federal government as soon as possible. But – not just any agreement will do.

Some elements of existing ELCC Agreements reflect recommendations that the Advocacy Forum has been making for some time. They provide a basis from which BC can and should build. Specifically, the Child Care Advocacy Forum is looking for an Agreement that ensures:

- ✓ BC begins to build an integrated, high quality **system** of early learning and child care.
- ✓ BC develops and implements a **Child Care Action Plan** that moves us away from the current user fee system to a **publicly funded** system.
- ✓ BC uses federal funds to **supplement rather than replace** provincial child care spending.
- ✓ BC openly **consults** with families, providers and communities as the province moves forward.

Only an Agreement that achieves these ends will make a real difference on the ground for children, families, providers and communities.

What Can You Do?

Let your newly elected or re-elected MLA know that you are counting on them to support real progress on child care. Let them know what you expect from an ELCC Agreement-in-Principle and from a Child Care Action Plan.

For current MLA contact info go to www.legis.gov.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm.

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Early Learning AND Child Care It's Time to End the Divide Fall 2005

As children across BC return to school, the province is poised to sign an Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care with the federal government. Under this Agreement, BC will receive over \$600 million in the next 5 years from the federal government to begin building a quality, universally inclusive, accessible and developmental child care system in BC.

Even though BC has only begun to make its plans for using these funds public, one very troubling direction is emerging. It appears that our provincial government **does not understand the fundamental link between quality child care and early learning and is headed down a path that will not serve children, families or communities well.**

The first sign of trouble came in June, when Premier Campbell announced his new Cabinet and assigned responsibility for early learning to the Minister of Education and responsibility for child care to a Minister of State within the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

This split reflects serious misunderstandings about the role quality child care plays in promoting childhood growth, development and learning and about the needs of the majority of BC's working families.

Concerns continue to mount as the Minister of Education, Shirley Bond, promises new initiatives, through her Ministry, that will help children become 'school ready'. Suggestions are that early learning centres, all-day Kindergarten or perhaps 'pre-school' programs may be the way to go.

This approach reflects a very limited view of early childhood development and makes no attempt to address the needs of BC's working families. Further, these plans seem completely disconnected from the long-promised development of a Child Care Action Plan within MCFD.

Before new federal dollars that are intended for regulated child care are diverted into part-time, academic readiness or early literacy programs – we are calling on the provincial government to reconsider the early learning/child care split. Here's why:

1. Quality child care **is** early learning whether delivered in pre-school, family or centre based child care settings. Early childhood educators, backed up by a growing body of research, know that the way to support children is to encourage them to develop socially, physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Children learn through play and a narrow focus on 'academic readiness', to the exclusion of children's other developmental needs, **is not the way to go.**
2. BC's licensed pre-school programs are delivered by early childhood educators who have the same training and qualifications as those who work in licensed child care centres. The main difference is that pre-schools are part-time programs that children attend for a few hours, 2 or 3 days a week. **To suggest that 'pre-schools' are about 'learning' while child care is about 'care' is false and misleading.**

3. In 2003, over 126,000 BC mothers whose youngest child was under the age of 5 were in the paid labour force. Labour force participation rates are even higher for mothers of school-aged children. These families and their children need stable quality child care for the full working day. While pre-schools are an important part of a comprehensive range of child care services in a community – **they do not meet the needs of most working families.**
4. Contrary to recent statements made by Stan Hagen, BC's Minister of Children and Family Development, the new federal funds are not a 'windfall'. Rather, they are the result of 25 years of hard work by parents, advocates, researchers and caregivers who **raised public and political awareness about the importance of the early years, about the societal benefits of public investment in quality child care and about the needs of today's families.**
5. While there are many supports and services that can and will help young families, **the new federal funds must be used to improve access to high quality child care programs that promote children's development AND meet the needs of working families.**

That is why the Child Care Advocacy Forum opposes the use of new federal funds on initiatives that do not address children's development in a holistic way and do not meet the needs of working families.

That does not mean we oppose an effective working relationship between education and child care. On the contrary – quality child care is the cornerstone of an effective early learning strategy. And, families and children benefit when child care programs are located in or near schools. They benefit when schools and providers work together to ensure a smooth transition into kindergarten. They benefit when child care has access to school resources like libraries, gyms and playgrounds.

As a starting place, the province must **eliminate significant barriers to integrated service delivery at the school board level.** Some School Districts seem to view the new federal child care funds as a source of revenue and are offering empty school space at 'market rental rates' for on-site child care. If this continues, it will significantly reduce funds available to improve access, affordability or quality of child care programs. Some School Districts seem to have a clear preference for on-site pre-school or other part-time programs regardless of their community's child care needs. If this continues, it will put child care that meets the needs of working families at a distinct disadvantage.

The child care system that BC families and children need and deserve can't be built overnight, but there is a better way to move forward. We are therefore calling on the provincial government to:

1. Make a commitment to build a child care system that entitles every child access to quality services and experiences.
2. End the false and dangerous separation between early learning and child care.
3. Develop an integrated Action Plan that moves us away from the current user fee system to a publicly funded child care system.
4. Tie the new federal funds to implementation of the Action Plan with clear targets and timelines.
5. Establish an accountable and credible process for child care planning at the community level to establish priorities for new growth and development.
6. Remove existing policy and funding barriers that impede the co-location of child care programs that meet clearly identified community needs in public schools.

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Federal Child Care Dollars Begin to Flow September 2005

On Sept. 9, Minister Stan Hagen announced how BC will spend \$33 million that it will receive when the province signs an early learning and child care agreement with the federal government later this month. Under this pending agreement, BC will receive \$633 million from the federal government over five years. This is the first of a series of spending announcements to come.

As of October 1, child care spending in three areas will increase:

Child Care Subsidies – Eligibility levels and rates will increase for families using regulated care for children under six. There will be no increase for unregistered license-not-required family child care, in-home care or licensed family or group care for children from six to twelve years of age. (See www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/ChildCar/PDFs/rate_table_meia.pdf and www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/ChildCar/PDFs/subsidy_example.pdf)

Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) – Rates will increase for services for children under 6 with no increase for group or family care for children from six to twelve years of age. There will continue to be no accountability measures for how CCOF funds are spent. (For new rates see www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/ChildCar/grant_op_fund.htm)

Capital Funding – \$6 million is being added to 2005-06 capital funding. Maximum funding for major capital grants will increase to \$300,000 and the province's contribution will rise to 50% of capital costs in any region of BC. Targeted major capital grants of up to \$500,000 covering 90% of capital costs will be available in some areas of high need. Maximum minor capital grants will increase to \$5000. (For more details see www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/providers.htm#new)

Minister Hagen also announced that in October, the province will begin a **Stakeholder Consultation** to develop its Action Plan for the remaining 4 years of federal funding BC will receive.

After four years of devastating cuts to child care, these spending announcements are welcome news for BC families and caregivers. In the short term, more spending on child care is essential and families and child care providers will do their best to put it to the best possible use.

However, Minister Hagen's announcements do not yet show that BC is ready to build the child care system that children and families need.

Here's why:

1. **BC has still not made a commitment to restore the \$40 million cut from provincial spending on child care.** All of the new spending comes from federal transfer payments. Even after this announcement, child care spending is not yet back to where it was in 2001. And, because federal funds are for regulated care for children under the age of six, funding for school-age care in BC continues to be ignored. As a first step – the BC government should restore its own child care spending to 2001/02 levels and make investment in quality, licensed before and after school care the top priority for these funds.

2. **BC's spending priorities are not the way to build a system.** Most of the money announced on Sept. 9 will go into child care subsidies, an income tested program that provides eligible families with funds to help them cover the cost of child care. A much smaller amount is being spent on the Child Care Operating Fund that provides funds directly to licensed caregivers.

For over 30 years, subsidies have received the lion's share of BC's child care budget. Yet, the evidence is increasingly clear that subsidies are not the way to ensure access, promote quality, or support stability. They do not guarantee that families will find a quality space and only have a short-term impact on affordability. As the OECD said in its 2004 report on Early Learning and Child Care in Canada, "Subsidy funding to child care centres is often inefficient (many eligible parents are unable to access subsidies — see Cleveland and Hyatt, 1997), and costly to operate both at governmental and early childhood centre level."

The Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) has the potential to be a more effective way to invest public funds in quality child care. However, to be effective, direct operating funding programs like CCOF need to meet two basis conditions. First, they need to provide child care services with sufficient funds to make quality services affordable, and second, those receiving the funds need to be accountable for using them in ways that advance public policy objectives. **The current CCOF program meets neither of these conditions.**

BC needs to change its funding patterns and **invest significantly more in accountable, adequate direct operating funding.** This funding must be tied to affordable parent fees and improved quality, primarily through increased staff compensation and recognition. Subsidies for those who still cannot afford the reduced fees should continue but over time an effective direct operating program will reduce the demand for subsidies.

3. **Effective capital spending needs to be based on community child care plans.** There is no question that BC needs more quality child care spaces and significant increases in capital spending are required. An effective capital program must ensure that funds are spent to build spaces that meet community needs and priorities. This means moving away from the current 'reactive' approach where government has no capital plan and relies on requests for funding that may or may not reflect community priorities.

BC must establish **a community-based child care planning process through which local and regional child care priorities are identified.** Capital dollars should be tied to community plans to ensure that over time, priority needs are addressed. A capital program should help integrate rather than further fragment the delivery of licensed child care in BC.

For these reasons, the Child Care Advocacy Forum is still looking for a long-term Child Care Action Plan that moves BC towards a publicly funded child care system that entitles all children access to quality child care experiences.

Our attention is now focused on the upcoming community consultation when we will be looking for a long-term BC Child Care Action Plan that:

- ✓ Restores provincial child care funding to 2001/02 levels.
- ✓ Addresses the needs of children from birth to 12 years of age.
- ✓ Moves to an adequate, accountable direct operating program that is tied to affordable parent fees and improved quality through adequate compensation for child care providers.
- ✓ Establishes an effective community-based child care planning system that enables communities to identify immediate priorities and develop long-term plans for comprehensive child care services.

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Send a Message to Minister Hagen OCTOBER 2005

On Sept. 29, 2005, the Governments of BC and Canada signed an Agreement in Principle on Early Learning and Child Care. Under this Agreement, BC will receive \$633 million over the next 5 years for regulated child care for children under the age of 6. The province has promised to consult with the community about a BC Action Plan for spending these funds.

We need to send government a loud, strong message that we expect them to use the funds to move away from the current user fee child care system to a publicly funded child care system.

To make it easy for you to have your voice heard, the Advocacy Forum has prepared a message you can send to Minister Stan Hagen. You can either:

- download, print and mail a copy of the letter, or
- send Minister Hagen an email.

Please share this campaign with others in your community and encourage them to send a Message to the Minister. Together, let's make sure that BC begins to build the child care system children and families need and deserve.

BC now has over \$600 million of federal funds for child care. BC should use this money to move away from the current user fee child care system to a publicly funded child care system that:



- ✓ Creates a quality, stable space for every child
- ✓ Is affordable for all
- ✓ Meets the needs of working and studying families
- ✓ Provides caregivers with fair incomes and the respect they deserve

Minister Hagen,

BC now has over \$600 million of federal funds for child care. BC should use this money to move away from the current user fee child care system to a publicly funded child care system that:

- ✓ Creates a quality, stable space for every child
- ✓ Is affordable for all
- ✓ Meets the needs of working and studying families
- ✓ Provides caregivers with fair incomes and the respect they deserve.

NAME _____

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I am a parent__ caregiver__ concerned community member__

please
affix
postage
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Child Care Advocacy Forum

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www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum

Participating Organizations:

BC Association of
Child Care Services

Coalition of Child Care
Advocates of BC

Early Childhood
Educators of BC

School Age Child Care
Association of BC

Westcoast Child Care
Resource Centre

Western Canada Family
Child Care Association
of BC

Funding and Support provided by:

Status of Women Canada
- BC/Yukon Region
through Coalition of Child
Care Advocates of BC



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BC's Child Care Action Plan Community Consultation

LET'S SEND A STRONG MESSAGE November 2005

On September 29, 2005, BC signed an Agreement in Principle on Early Learning and Child Care with the federal government. Under this Agreement, BC will receive \$633 million from the federal government for regulated child care for children from birth to six years of age. The federal transfer funds began to flow this year (2005/06) and will continue until 2009/10. The BC government has already announced how it will spend federal money this year. (For more information see www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum/pdf/AdvForum_fedfunds.pdf).

Under this agreement, BC is required to develop and release an Action Plan on Early Learning and Child Care. This will include a spending plan for the federal funds in Years 2–5. This Action Plan is to be completed by January 31, 2006.

Staff in the Ministry of Children and Family Development confirm that they will consult with communities about this Action Plan in November. Details about community meetings and background documents are to be posted on their website (see <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/>). Once these are available, the Advocacy Forum will share our responses widely.

But — regardless of the way government shapes the consultations or the questions they ask — it is important they hear a consistent, strong message in every community. Here are 4 key messages to send:

Message #1 — BC needs to use the federal funds to move away from a user fee child care system to a publicly funded system.

BC spending priorities must shift from child care subsidies to an adequate, accountable direct operating program tied to affordability and quality.

For 30 years, most of BC's child care spending has gone into the child care subsidy program which is intended to help low income families cover the cost of child care. This program continues to be the BC government's priority for the new federal funds which, as of October 1, 2005 are already going into increased subsidy eligibility levels and rates.

In the short term, subsidy increases seem like good news for families and caregivers. But, the evidence is clear that they do not build a child care system. They do not guarantee families will find a quality space. They only have a short-term impact on affordability. Subsidies act as the 'bottom rate' for fees so increases in subsidy rates inevitably lead to increases in fees. Finally, they do nothing to promote financial stability for child care services.

The new federal funds provide an opportunity for BC to change its funding patterns by **investing significantly more in accountable, adequate direct operating funding**. This funding must be tied to affordable parent fees and improved quality through increased staff compensation and recognition. Subsidies for those who still cannot afford the reduced fees should continue. Over time, lower fees will reduce the need for subsidies.

Message #2 – BC needs an accountable and credible process for child care planning at the community level to set priorities for new growth and development.

BC's capital funding must be tied to community plans that meet immediate priorities and work towards developing a comprehensive range of quality child care services.

BC needs more quality child care spaces so significant increases in capital spending are required. But, government must ensure that these funds are spent to build stable spaces that meet community needs and priorities. This means moving away from the current 'reactive' approach where government has no capital plan but relies on requests for funding that may or may not reflect the greatest needs and priorities.

The new federal funds provide an opportunity for BC to establish a credible, transparent community-based child care planning process through which local and regional child care priorities are identified and long term plans developed.

Message #3 – BC needs to end the divide between early learning and child care.

The current separation between 'early learning' delivered through the Ministry of Education and 'child care' delivered through the Ministry of Children and Family Development is false and misleading. Quality child care IS early learning whether delivered in pre-school, group or family care settings. The main difference between pre-schools and licensed child care centres is that pre-schools are part-time programs that children attend for a few hours, 2 or 3 days a week. While pre-schools are an important part of a comprehensive range of child care services, they do not meet the needs of the vast majority of working BC families.

The new federal funds provide an opportunity for BC to improve access to high quality child care programs that promote children's development AND meet the needs of working and studying families.

Message #4 – BC needs to restore provincial child care funding cuts and make investments in licensed school aged child care the top priority for these funds.

Between 2001 and 2005, BC received close to \$250 million from the federal government for early childhood development including child care. Over the same period, BC cut \$40 million from its own annual spending on child care. All of the new and projected provincial spending comes from federal transfer payments. Even with the recently announced spending, overall child care spending is not back to where it was in 2001.

Further, federal funds are for regulated care for children under the age of six. As a result, access to affordable, quality school-age care in BC continues to be ignored by the province.

The BC government should restore its own child care spending to 2001/02 levels. The top priority for spending the restored provincial funds should be quality, licensed before and after school care.

No matter what questions government asks — send these 4 messages in the upcoming Child Care Community Consultations.

Check our website at www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum for updated information about ways to ensure BC's Child Care Action Plan meets the needs of children, families and caregivers.

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AN URGENT MESSAGE FROM THE ADVOCACY FORUM Child Care Consultation is on Act Now to Make sure your Voice is Heard! November 2005

The province is now asking for community input into how to spend \$633 million in federal funds BC will receive over the next 5 years for regulated child care for children under the age of 6. There are two consultations underway:

- The Ministry of Education is consulting about how to respond to its new mandate for early learning and literacy. While federal child care funds are 'on the table' at this consultation, there is no public information about how to participate. Contact your local School Board or MLA and ask.
- The Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) is consulting about priorities for Early Learning and Child Care. Information only became public a few days ago and timelines are tight. Public meetings are underway and on-line input needs to be in by the end of November.

Act now to make sure your voice is heard. There are two ways to participate.

1. PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON-LINE.

Go to www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/consult.htm to read MCFD's on-line Discussion Paper and complete their on-line Feedback Form.

The Advocacy Forum is sharing our responses to the on-line Feedback Form at www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum/pdf/questionnaire.doc. Cut and paste or build on these responses by adding your own so that government gets clear and consistent messages.

2. ATTEND A PUBLIC MEETING IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Public meetings are still coming up in some communities. For information on dates and registration, go to www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/consult.htm.

At the meeting, include 4 key messages in your comments:

1. **Use federal funds to move from a user fee child care system to a publicly funded system.** We need adequate, accountable direct operating funds that are tied to affordability and quality.
2. **Develop an accountable and credible process for child care planning at the community level.** Tie capital funding to the resulting community plans.
3. **End the divide between child care and early learning.** Quality child care IS early learning. Use federal child care funds for regulated child care programs that meet children's developmental needs and the needs of working and studying families.
4. **Restore provincial child care funding to 2001/02 levels and use these funds for affordable, quality school-aged care.** The federal funds are only for regulated child care for children under 6 but we need a child care system for children from birth to 12.

A copy of MCFD's on-line Feedback Form follows. To provide your feedback, go to <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/questionnaire.asp>. The Advocacy Forum's responses to the questions are in the light blue boxes below. You can cut and paste or build on these responses by adding your own so that government gets clear and consistent messages.

Early Learning and Child Care in BC Consultation Paper

We Want Your Input

We want your feedback and input on the direction and priorities for early learning and child care set out in the November 2005 *Early Learning and Child Care in British Columbia* consultation paper. Please read the consultation paper and take a few minutes to fill in the following response sheet. Please provide comments on all or any of the following areas.

1. BC's VISION FOR CHILDREN

British Columbia is committed to giving children the best future possible by increasing supports available for child care, early childhood development programs and early learning programs, all of which should increase the proportion of children entering school ready to learn.

"VISION" for Early Learning and Child Care in BC

Access to quality early learning and child care in all BC communities that meet the needs of all young children and their families.

What, if any, are your views on the "vision" statement for early learning and child care?

To meet the needs of all young children and families, we need a publicly funded child care system. Building this system should be BC's vision.

2. "GOALS" for Early Learning and Child Care in BC

- more children will enter school better prepared to succeed
- more BC families will have access to quality child care
- more families will have access to a range of early learning programs and services
- more children with special needs will be supported in order to be included in quality community-based child care settings
- more children will be cared for by qualified child care workers in regulated child care spaces
- more BC families will have access to community hubs where a range of integrated family services are located

What, if any, are your views on the "goals" for early learning and child care? Is a goal missing or does something need to be changed, added or deleted? And, if so, why?

These goals are too vague. Clear timelines and targets for increasing access to affordable, high quality child care over the next 5 years are required. These goals continue the false divide between child care and early learning. Quality child care IS early learning.

3. "PRINCIPLES" for Early Learning and Child Care as agreed to by the Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments:

- Quality
- Universally Inclusive
- Accessible
- Developmental

In addition to these four principles, the BC government had adopted the following:

- Choice and Flexibility
- Targeted Investments (to low income families and children with special needs)
- Integrated Services

If you have any comments on the principles, please indicate below.

CHOICE - Real choice depends on a comprehensive range of available, affordable, quality child care options. Current usage patterns do not reflect 'real choice'.
TARGETED INVESTMENTS – For 30 years, BC has put most of its child care spending into targeted child care programs. This approach has NOT built an equitable system. Now is the time to put public funds into building a system that entitles access for all.

4. Towards Quality Early Learning and Child Care: Building Blocks

Enhancements to Child Care Subsidy - Effective October 1, 2005

- increase in income threshold from approximately \$21,000 to approximately \$38,000 depending on individual circumstances;
- increase in subsidy rates to better reflect the cost of care;
- funding for children who do not attend a licensed group or preschool setting to allow them to benefit from a preschool experience

What, if any, are your views on the changes to enhance the child care subsidy program. Is there some way the program could be improved or changed?

Subsidies do not mean that families will be able to find a space.
Increases in subsidy rates lead to increases in fees.
Subsidies do not promote sustainable child care services.
Now is the time to shift funding priorities from subsidies to adequate and accountable operating funding.

Enhancements to Child Care Operating Funding - Effective October 1, 2005

- increase of 36.6% in operating funding for eligible licensed child care providers for services to children under six to support a stable supply of child care spaces
- link future operating funding increases to quality enhancement

What, if any, are your views on the changes to enhance the child care operator funding program. Is there some way the program could be improved or changed?

This should be government's top priority. Increase Child Care Operating Funding to adequate levels and tie it to affordability for families and increased staff compensation and recognition.
This is the only way to achieve the QUAD principles and to ensure accountability for public funds.

Enhancements to Child Care Capital Funding - Effective October 1, 2005

- increase in maximum Major Capital Funding Program for the creation of new licensed group child care spaces from \$250,000 to \$300,000 with a provincial contribution of 50%;
- new Targeted Major Capital Funding Program for Aboriginal communities and priority communities identified with the Early Development Instrument (EDI) to a maximum of \$500,000 with a provincial contribution of 90%;
- increase in the Minor Capital Funding Program for emergency repair and replacement from \$4000 to \$5000; child care providers with multiple licensed care types at the same facility are eligible for up to \$10,000.

What, if any, are your views on the changes to enhance the Child Care Capital Funding Program. Is there some way the program could be improved or changed?

Tie capital funding to credible community plans that identify short and long term priorities.
Once plans are developed, adequate capital funding must be provided to ensure that publicly developed child care is a permanent community asset.
Reacting to 'proposals' is not the way to go.

Supported Child Development - Supported Child Development (SCD) provides support to children with special needs to participate in child care and preschool programs in their communities.

- improve access to child care for children with special needs
- reduce wait times
- access to culturally appropriate SCD services for Aboriginal children

What do you think about these changes to improve access and reduce waiting times and build partnerships with Aboriginal communities to deliver Supported Child Development Services? Is there some way the program could be improved or changed?

Culturally appropriate services are essential.
To achieve real inclusion we need a strong, accessible system that meets the needs of all. Keep the SCD focus on supporting children's participation in regulated child care.

Community Planning and Partnerships

- community grant funding for community planning and development
- greater support and resources for Child Care Resource and Referral Centres (CCRR)
- integrated service delivery models for child care and early childhood development programs

What do you think about this proposal to work with communities to build child care planning capacity and to identify and develop early learning and child care programs that meet specific community needs? Is something missing or does something need to be changed or added? And, if so, why?

Do you have some specific ideas about how we should partner with communities to ensure that individual needs are identified and met?

A credible, transparent, community-based child care planning process through which local and regional child care priorities are identified is essential.
This requires the clear identification of a child care planning mandate and resourced community structures through which child care plans are developed.
The broad directions outlined above do not yet constitute a 'workable proposal'.

Human Resource Development

- establish a body of knowledge about the provincial child care sector
- develop strategies to recruit, train and retain new and existing workers

What do you think about this proposal to enhance child care human resource planning and development? Is something missing or does something need to be changed or added? And, if so, why?

The key problem is wages. Public funds must be used to bring caregiver wages, benefits and working conditions up to levels that match the education, experience and responsibilities required on the job.

Once these issues are addressed, access to training that leads to credentials is essential. But, without addressing these issues, public investment in training will not work as caregivers will continue to leave the field.

Early Learning Initiatives:

- families of preschool children have increased choice for early learning programs
- new options for families

What suggestions do you have for other early learning opportunities for children in BC?

End the false and dangerous separation between early learning and child care. Quality child care IS early learning whether delivered in family, group or pre-school settings.

Narrowly defined, part-time early literacy programs that focus on 'school readiness' do not meet children's developmental needs and do not meet the needs of the majority of BC's working and studying families.

5. "PRIORITIES" for improving quality of Early Learning and Child Care in BC.

Based on the Building Blocks or other ideas you may have, please indicate your five major priorities for early learning and child care in BC for the next five years. Please indicate why these priorities are important and list them in order of their importance to you (for example, the first item on the list should be the one that you consider the most important).

List of Priorities in order of importance:

Priority #1

Develop an adequate, accountable operating funding program that makes child care affordable for parents and provides caregivers with adequate incomes and recognition. This is the way to move away from the current user fee child care system to a publicly funded system.

Priority #2

End the false and dangerous divide between child care and early learning. Invest federal child care funds in quality, regulated child care programs that promote children's holistic development AND meet the needs of working and studying families.

Priority #3

Develop an accountable and credible process for child care planning at the community level to set priorities for new growth and development.

Priority #4

Restore provincial child care funding to 2001/02 levels and make investment in licensed school age child care the top priority for these funds.
Federal funds are for regulated child care for children under the age of 6. As a result, access to affordable, quality school-age care in BC needs to be a provincial priority.

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FEDERAL ELECTION 2006 DON'T TURN BACK THE CHILD CARE CLOCK!

December 2005

On January 23, 2006 Canadians will go to the polls to elect a new federal government. **At last, child care is emerging as a critical issue in this campaign.** Families, child care providers and advocates must send candidates and voters a strong message that there can be no turning back.

During the last federal election, in June 2004, the federal Liberal party promised a national child care system based on the principles of Quality, Universality, Accessibility and Developmental programs. They committed \$5 billion over 5 years to start building the system.

What's Been Delivered?

When the federal Liberal minority government fell in November, 2005 some but not all of the child care promise had been fulfilled.

- The 2005/06 federal budget included funds for child care and each province and territory received its Year 1 allocation.
- The federal government reached Agreements in Principle on Early Learning and Child Care with all 10 provinces.

Federal leadership and investment in building a quality child care system was supported by the federal New Democratic Party.

BC expects to receive \$633 million over 5 years for regulated child care for children under the age of 6 and has already spent much of the Year 1 money.

What's Been Proposed?

The federal Liberals are proposing to extend their financial commitment to early learning and child care until 2015. They will add \$6 billion to the existing \$5 billion commitment and will continue to transfer the funds to provinces to use to build child care systems.

The federal Conservatives are proposing fundamental changes to federal involvement in child care. They will spend \$10.9 billion over 5 years to:

- Give families a taxable allowance of \$1200 a year for every child under the age of 6. The funds can be spent as the family 'chooses'.
- Provide tax credits valued at \$250 million to employers and community organizations to create new child care spaces.
- Honour the current Year 1 (2005/06) of federal funding under existing Agreements with provinces but cancel funding commitments for Years 2 – 5.

What's At Stake?

If implemented, the Conservative proposal means that as of March 31, 2006 existing federal funds that can be used to begin building a child care system for BC will be gone.

And, while many families need higher incomes, providing \$100 a month to families for each child is **not** a child care program or solution.

Here's why:

- \$100 a month does not come close to covering the cost of quality care and certainly doesn't replace a parent's income.
- A direct payment to families does nothing to create quality child care spaces. While proponents say it supports choice, real choice depends on affordable, accessible, quality options.
- This approach provides no accountability for over \$10 billion in public expenditures. Canadians have a right to expect that public spending will lead to improvements in access, quality and affordability of care.

If this approach prevails, BC could lose close to \$550 million intended for regulated child care. Tell your federal candidates that you expect a sustained commitment to a publicly funded, high quality child care system that promotes healthy child development and meets diverse family needs.

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Tell Your MP that Child Care Matters FEBRUARY 2006

The results of the recent federal election put federal funding for child care at risk. If the newly elected Conservative government cancels federal-provincial agreements on child care, BC stands to lose close to \$600 million. But — we can make a difference.

Tell your recently elected MP that cuts to federal funding for child care will hurt children and families in their community. Tell them that child care funding should not be pitted against income supports for low and moderate income families. Tell them there is a workable solution that they should support.

You can copy and paste the email message below and send it to your MP. Add your personal experiences, or write your own letter. Find your MP's email address (if your MP is newly elected, it may take a while for their email address to be posted).

Let's make sure that the progress we have achieved together continues.

Copy and paste this message and send it to your MP. Add your own experiences, or write your own letter.

Congratulations on your recent election as our MP. During the election campaign, there was a lot of discussion about how to support families with young children. Unfortunately, families' need for quality, affordable child care was pitted against their need for family allowances. But young families in our communities need both.

If the child care agreement between BC and the federal government is cancelled, children and families in our community will pay the price.

Canadians elected a minority government and we expect all parties to find constructive, cooperative solutions. You can be part of the solution for children and families by supporting child care funding and income supports for low and moderate income families.

Sincerely,

(Your name and address)

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The Federal Throne Speech What's At Stake for Child Care? April 2006

On April 4, 2006 the Conservative federal government delivered its first Throne Speech. As expected, the Speech repeated two 'child care' campaign promises but was silent on the 'promise' to cancel existing federal-provincial child care agreements as of March 31, 2007. Here's what's at stake...

Direct Financial Support to Parents

The Throne Speech says that the Government "will help Canadian parents, as they seek to balance work and family life, by supporting their child care choices through direct financial support."

This is a reference to a key plank in the Conservative election program – a **taxable family allowance** of \$100 a month paid directly to parents for every child under the age of 6. This allowance will be taxed as income for the lowest earning parent in a family. It will also affect eligibility for other income tested benefits such as the National Child Tax Benefit, the GST Rebate and BC's Child Care Subsidy Program.

As a result, very few families will actually get \$1200 a year and families with a stay-at-home parent will benefit more than families with both parents in the workforce. The Caledon Institute estimates that the after tax benefit for a one-income family with an annual income of \$100,000 will be \$1,032 while a two-income family earning \$30,000 a year will only net \$460 a year. This is clearly not fair. It rewards families who can afford to have a parent at home and penalizes families where both parents work.

Even before taxes, this allowance does not come close to covering the cost of quality child care. Nor does it do anything to create new quality spaces.

Income supports for low and moderate income families are important and even this minimal benefit will help some. But – this is NOT an effective child care program. Contrary to the claims – it does not help work-family life balance and does not support real choice for most Canadian families.

Creating Child Care Spaces

The Throne Speech says that "In collaboration with the provinces and territories, employers and community non-profit organizations, (the federal government) will also encourage the creation of new child care spaces."

This is a reference to the second plank in the Conservative election platform – an ill-defined promise to provide **tax incentives** to businesses and community organizations to create new child care spaces.

This approach will do little to create new quality, sustainable child care spaces. It only addresses capital costs but does nothing about the need for on-going, stable operating costs. Experience across Canada clearly demonstrates that few if any private sector employers are prepared to assume the long-term financial liability of operating child care. And, tax incentives are of no use to non-profit organizations but could well open the door to multinational big box child care chains in Canada.

Federal-Provincial Early Learning and Child Care Agreements

The Throne Speech is silent on the Conservative 'promise' to cancel the existing Federal-Provincial Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Agreements as of March 31, 2007.

Under the existing ELCC Agreement, BC was to receive \$633 million over 5 years from the federal government for regulated child care. In the first year (2005) BC received \$92 million but only managed to spend \$55 million on increases to the child care subsidy program (eligibility and rates), an across the board increase to the Child Care Operating Fund and additional child care capital funding. This year – BC received an additional \$85.6 million under the ELCC agreement but has yet to publicly announce its spending plans.

If the federal government cancels the ELCC Agreement, BC will lose **\$455 million** in dedicated child care funds. Yet, the BC government has been silent. They have not released the results of the Fall 2005 consultation on child care; they have not released the long-promised Child Care Action Plan and they have not joined other provinces in calling on the federal government to honour the ELCC agreements.

We Are Making A Difference

Our efforts to protect multi-year child care funding are having an impact. The federal government is starting to realize that the majority of Canadians voted for political parties that support public investment in child care. Replacing federal-provincial child care agreements with a meager taxable family allowance is not Canadians' priority.

Our job is to keep the pressure on!

Here's what you can do:

- Collect as many signatures as possible on the "CODE BLUE for Child Care" Open Letter to the Prime Minister and Premier. Go to www.buildchildcare.ca to sign on. Download hard copies and collect signature in your community. Organize a 'sign-in' at the local mall, set up a sign-up table at your child care program and send the link to friends, family and community organizations.
- Call your MP and let them know you expect them to stand up for child care. Tell them that families need income supports and publicly funded quality child care. Canada can and should do both. MP contact information is available at http://canada.gc.ca/directories/direct_e.html.
- Call you MLA and let them know you expect BC to stand up for the child care agreement they signed. Tell them you hold the province accountable for action on child care with or without federal funds. MLA contact information is available at <http://www.legis.gov.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm>.
- Lobby your Municipal Council and School Board to pass a resolution supporting the child care agreements. Sample resolutions are at <http://www.buildchildcare.ca/www/buildchildcare/20379>.

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May is Child Care Month This Year – Let's ACT!

May is Child Care Month – a time to proudly affirm that quality child care:

- Supports children and families
- Builds community
- Promotes inclusion
- Is delivered by dedicated and skilled caregivers.

Child Care Month is a time to affirm that when communities have adequate public support and funding – we can and will get the job done.

This year – much is on the line. Child care values – values of sharing, equality, respect and collective responsibility – are under attack.

Federal funds that communities looked to for building a quality, affordable child care system are being withdrawn. A campaign to undermine public confidence in community-based child care by labeling it 'institutional' care is in full gear. The promise of income support for all families is disappearing as Canadians learn that affluent, single income families will benefit the most from the new allowance.

For over 20 years, Child Care Month has been a time to educate, celebrate and advocate. **This year, it's time to act.** Here's what you can do:

1. Rally in Victoria on May 16

Join caregivers, parents and community members on **Wednesday May 16 from 1-2pm on the grounds of the Provincial Legislature** for a family friendly child care rally. (Check www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum for more details and for information on travel from Vancouver to Victoria for the rally.)

2. Plan your own Child Care Rally

If you can't get to Victoria, plan a rally or event in your community. Involve parents, profile quality child care, and call on our governments to develop a child care plan and commit the resources to make it happen.

3. Sock it to 'em!

Involve families in the Parent Voices campaign to let Premier Campbell and Prime Minister Harper know that parents expect them to honour the day care deal signed last year. Information, paper socks and other campaign materials are at www.cccabc.bc.ca/act/sockit/.

4. Code Blue for Child Care

Keep building the pan-Canadian campaign to protect the federal-provincial child care agreement. Info and actions are at www.buildchildcare.ca.

For Child Care Month this year – think and act outside the box. Have fun and be strong.

Remember – we speak for the majority of Canadians who truly understand that it takes a village to raise a child. Now – let's make sure that the village has the resources it needs to do the job.

Happy Child Care Month!

Our Children Count!
A Rally on the Grounds of the Legislature
May 16th at 1:00



May 3/06

Dear Parents,

BC stands to lose hundreds of millions of dollars for child care from the federal government. Yet, the BC government has remained silent on its commitment to provide a comprehensive community-based child care system for families in our province.

On Tuesday, May 16th, there will be a Child Care Rally at 1:00 PM on the Grounds of the Legislature. The goal of this rally is to draw attention to the value of and need for affordable, quality, child care in the Victoria area and across BC.

At the rally, we will be calling on the provincial government to develop a plan for meeting our communities' child care needs and to provide adequate funds to make it happen.

As parents currently using quality child care and as voters, your support is critical! What's currently at stake? A loss of federal dollars for child care services could set off:

- Cuts to subsidy rates
- Increased child care fees
- Loss of child care spaces (programs closing)
- Fewer child care choices for families

We are asking you to:

- Attend the rally, bring your child or children.
- Support and encourage your child care staff to participate. If you can pick your child up early on May 16 and attend the rally – 2 things are accomplished!

We believe it is the responsibility of our governments to build quality comprehensive child care system for our families. **Please join us in saying that children, families and communities need child care now!**

If you have questions, please talk with your child care staff or look for background information on the Coalition of Child Care Advocacy of BC website www.cccabc.bc.ca

Our Children Count!
A Rally on the Grounds of the Legislature
May 16th at 1:00



How can you participate?

We encourage everyone who cares for children and their right to quality early childhood programs to join us. Our numbers will speak loudly.

- ✚ Consider closing your program so staff can attend. Encourage parents to join us with their children.
- ✚ OR send a representative – a staff member, a parent, a board member. Bring a placard showing the children, parents and staff that will be affected if funding stops or is reduced. (see example below)
- ✚ Come during your lunch time to network and speak out for quality child care.
- ✚ Circulate our poster and fact sheets widely; then - bring a friend, a blanket, your afternoon snack and be prepared to stand up for BC's children and care providers.
- ✚ Add your voice. Share your unique perspective. Identify the issues that are important to you. Ask questions.
- ✚ Check out the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC website (www.cccabc.bc.ca) for advocacy information: campaigns, fact sheets, MLA's and MP's contact lists.

I am representing (name of program)

(number) of children, ages ___ to ___

(number) of families

(number) of staff

parents believe their children have a right to a quality child care and learning program

parents attend school, # parents work in our community

All are concerned about the impact of reduced funding.

Write your information on a placard.

Bring a second copy on a sheet of paper. We will collect your information and give it to a supportive MLA to take to the legislature.

Our Children Count!



Join us

May 16th at 1:00 pm
on the Grounds of the Legislature

to support a long term plan for child care!

- Quality child care means trained staff, worthy wages and ample funding and child care spaces.
- A comprehensive system of community-based child care that supports families includes full and part time options, group and family care, and out of school care in every community.
- Families need more than \$100 a month to provide them with real choices for quality child care.
- The BC government has remained silent on its commitment to provide a comprehensive community-based child care system for families in our province.

What Are We Waiting For British Columbia?

This event is for families, professionals and anyone concerned with the future of child care in our province. The afternoon will include speakers, information and children's activities.

Supported by the Regional Child Care Council of Victoria and the Child Care Advocacy Forum.

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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Participating Organizations:

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Coalition of Child Care
Advocates of BC

Early Childhood
Educators of BC

School Age Child Care
Association of BC

Westcoast Child Care
Resource Centre

Western Canada Family
Child Care Association
of BC

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Funding is also provided by:



VANCOUVER
FOUNDATION

CHILD CARE BY THE NUMBERS #1

June 2006

Throughout BC:

- **families** struggle to find quality, affordable child care
- **providers** struggle to get by on a less than living wage
- **programs** struggle to find qualified staff and keep the doors open
- **communities** struggle to save federal funds for child care.

Yet, Premier Campbell and Linda Reid, BC's minister of state for child care, say things have never been better – subsidies for families, operating funds to spaces and capital funds for expansion have all been increased.

(See BC Legislature Question Period statements on child care made May 16 at <http://www.leg.bc.ca/hansard/38th2nd/H60516p.htm>)

What explains such completely different pictures of child care in BC?
As usual, an analysis of the dollars provides some answers.

X Minister Reid says BC is spending **\$200 million** this year on child care. (We understand this includes provincial spending on child care programs, administration and Supported Child Development)

\$ If we accept this figure, it's not great news! Here's why:

In 2001 BC spent **\$240 million** on child care and this was **before the province received any federal funds for child care.**

In 2002, BC cut its own child care spending by \$40 million a year, to **\$200 million**. As a result:

- Thousands of BC families lost child care subsidies and had no choice but to remove their children from licensed care.
- Wages were rolled back and many qualified early childhood educators had no choice but to leave the field.
- Operating funds to programs were reduced and some programs had no choice but to raise fees, reduce service or close their doors.

In 2003, BC began to receive federal transfer funds for child care.

BC has used these funds to *replace* provincial cuts by:

- restoring subsidies for lower income families
- making slight increases in operating funds
- providing capital grants to create new spaces.

So, thanks to federal funds, we are **finally back to the 2001 child care funding level of \$240 million overall.**

***But* – the federal funds are due to end on March 31, 2007.**

Read on to see what Premier Campbell and Minister Reid 'say' about the child care numbers today. In response – read what 'we say' about what's at stake when federal transfer payments end.

When Premier Campbell or Minister Reid say:	We Say:
10,000 more children are eligible for subsidies.	Only after BC cut thousands of children off subsidy 4 years ago. And, even these increases are thanks only to federal funds.
40,000 more child care spaces now receive operating funds.	BC reduced the total amount of dollars going into child care operating funds. These reduced funds were spread more thinly over a larger number of spaces. Recent increases in operating funds were minimal and not tied to affordability or quality. And, even these increases are thanks only to federal funds.
1500 spaces have been created in the last 10 months	This doesn't take into account the instability in child care. For every 10 licensed family and centre-based programs that opened in BC, 9 closed within 4 years. (Kershaw 2005) BC's child care capital grant program does not cover the full capital cost of new spaces. The new spaces – which don't yet exist – only make a small dent in wait lists across BC. The new spaces are not tied to any coherent community or regional child care plans. And, even these spaces are thanks only to federal funds.
They are proud of their \$200 million annual provincial child care budget.	This amount does not include the federal funds that the province has used to reinvest in child care. This amount 'low balls' total spending to reduce expectations that BC will pick up the costs now paid for with federal funds. This is nothing to be proud of. It's still \$40 million less than BC spent on child care when this government took office.

In short — we say:

5 years without a child care plan, no new provincial dollars and no commitment to save or replace the federal child care dollars — IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH!

BC families and communities need to know what BC will do in the face of \$455 million in cuts to federal dedicated child care funds.

Watch for Child Care By The Numbers #2 for our analysis of how federal child care funds that are included in BC's 3 Year Budget could and should be used to build child care.

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Summer Advocacy Messages 2006

Summer is here – a time for some well-deserved rest and relaxation. But summer is also the ideal time for some ‘down home’ advocacy.

The ‘experts’ tell us that the most effective advocacy happens when MLAs and MPs meet with and hear directly from their constituents at home in their offices. These personal connections stand out from the thousands of letters, briefs, reports and petitions they receive.

During the summer, MLAs and MPs are in their constituencies. Now is the time to book an appointment and make child care advocacy up front and personal.

So, book a visit, share your local child care stories and use the messages below to make sure that politicians from all political parties hear a consistent message about key issues and next steps.

Messages for your Provincial MLA

BC has been virtually silent on the pending cut of over \$450 million dedicated child care dollars from the federal government. They have not reinvested provincial funds in child care, they have not released a BC Child Care Action Plan and they have further fragmented services by separating ministerial responsibility for child care from responsibility for early learning.

Tell your MLA that:

1. With or without federal dollars, the province is responsible for developing and funding a quality child care system that promotes healthy childhood development AND supports working families.
2. The report on BC’s Community Consultations on Early Learning and Child Care affirms that:
 - Access to quality child care must be a priority.
 - Investments in wages, working conditions and professional development are required to recruit and retain skilled staff.
 - Quality child care is early learning and childhood development.
 - Stable child care operating funding is the top priority.Government must act on this advice.
(See www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/consult.htm for Consultation Report)
3. BC promised a Child Care Action Plan by January 31, 2006. But there is still no plan. Families and providers still don’t know what will happen when the federal funds end on April 1, 2007.
4. Labour shortages are a growing problem in BC. But without child care, parents – especially mothers – can’t work.

Ask your MLA for a firm commitment that she or he will make child care a top priority.

Messages for your MP

The federal minority government has reversed significant progress on child care. They have implemented a taxable family allowance that will help some families, but is NOT child care. As of March 31, 2007 they will cancel the existing Early Learning and Child Care Agreements with BC (and other provinces). Over \$450 million BC was to receive for regulated child care is at stake. They plan to increase child care spaces by offering tax incentives to businesses – an approach that may open Canada up to big box child care chains.

Tell your MP that:

1. 77% of Canadians think the lack of affordable child care is a serious problem. Most Canadians prefer funding for affordable child care services over a taxable annual benefit (see <http://action.web.ca/home/ccaac/alerts.shtml?x=89810> for Poll results).
2. To really support families, the federal government must restore multi year funding to provinces and territories for building quality, affordable child care systems.
3. Capital funding without on-going operating funding will not work. And, tax incentives won't guarantee that new spaces will meet community priorities.
4. The new taxable family allowance may help some but it doesn't create child care spaces and doesn't cover the cost of child care. In fact, it benefits higher income families with one 'at home' parent more than it helps lower income families who need child care because both parents work (see www.caledoninst.org for analysis of after tax benefits).
5. Labour shortages are a growing problem in Canada. But without child care, parents – especially mothers – can't work.
6. And, if your MP thinks we are advocating for 'institutional child care' take some pictures with you – or better yet invite her or him to visit your family child care home or centre.

Ask your MP for a firm commitment that she or he will make child care a top priority.

Some tips to help make it easy:

- Find the name and contact information for
Your MLA at <http://www.legis.gov.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm>
Your MP at http://canada.gc.ca/directories/direct_e.html#mp
- Take someone with you – preferably a parent who needs child care.
- Speak from the heart. Tell your stories. Don't worry about having tons of facts.
- Take notes.
- After your meeting(s) send us a quick note about who you met with and what they said. Email us at forum@cccabc.bc.ca.
- **Speak as if you represent the majority because you do!**

**Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance
Pre-Budget Consultation
August 2006**

**Child Care
Advocacy
Forum**

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The Child Care Advocacy Forum is an alliance of six provincial child care organizations bringing together thousands of British Columbians who work cooperatively to advance a "Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care Services in BC." (See http://www.advocacyforum.bc.ca/common_agenda.html).

Since its creation in 1999, the Advocacy Forum has advocated for a publicly funded child care system that:

- ✓ Entitles all children access to quality child care programs regardless of their families' economic or employment status.
- ✓ Offers families choices from a range of coordinated, licensed, affordable, quality child care and early childhood programs.
- ✓ Is a key piece of comprehensive family policy that includes income supports, extended parental leave and progressive family/work policies.

Advocacy Forum publications, including previous Federal Pre-Budget Consultation submissions, are available at www.advocacyforum.bc.ca.

Canada's Place in a Competitive World – Child Care is a Solution

Child care is a multipurpose program that addresses both social and economic goals. Research and community experience demonstrate that quality child care has a life long impact on children's health and well being; enables parental participation in the labour force; supports all families including those whose children have additional needs; helps new Canadians during their settlement process and builds community.

Given the Committee's current interest and questions, this submission highlights the critical role child care plays in building the infrastructure required to achieve and sustain prosperity now and in the future.

1. A significant threat to Canada's ability to maintain quality of life for all is a current and projected labour shortage. To a large degree, a crisis has been averted over the last two decades due to the unprecedented entry rate of mothers of pre-school children into the Canadian labour force. Canadian prosperity and competitiveness now and in the future is dependent on women's economic participation. However, unless Canada is prepared to invest in supports for women's essential roles in the home and the economy, birth rates will likely continue to decline and labour force participation rates will stagnate. **Access** to affordable child care is clearly **part of the solution** to this economic problem.
2. Canada's future prosperity is dependent on a healthy and skilled work force. Research from social and physical sciences confirms that the quality of children's experiences in their early years has life long impacts. High quality care promotes positive development; poor quality care can do harm. This finding holds true for children from all economic and social classes. Canada's key trading partners recognize this fact and make significant public investment in supporting families with young children – through income supports and access to quality child care programs. Without similar attention, Canada will lag behind. **Quality** child care is clearly **part of the solution** to ensuring a healthy and skilled citizenry.

3. Child care offers a significant regional and local economic stimulus. By now, the results of a range of cost/benefit analyses of public investment in child care are indisputable. They indicate that child development and labour force benefits of public investment outweigh costs by a low of 2:1 to a high of 7:1 depending on the populations served. Notably, these benefits accrue over and above the stimulus to local and regional economies through direct expenditures on construction of new child care (materials and labour) and on-going wages paid to child care staff. Given the relatively small, community-based nature of child care, these direct expenditures are likely to remain within the regional and local economy. **Investment** in child care is clearly **part of the solution** to regional and local economic development.
4. Canada's reliance (other than in Quebec) on a market driven approach to child care supplemented by limited public investments on the demand side of the market has not worked. Only a small percentage of families have access to child care programs; the cost of child care is out of reach for many moderate and low income families; targeted demand side public expenditures do not create spaces or ensure quality, and financial instability undermines the role child care can play in regional economic development. The market failure of this approach to child care is primarily attributable to the fact that while families are required to be the sole consumers of child care, they are not the sole beneficiaries. On their own, families cannot sustain the full cost of achieving the societal benefits outlined above. **Public investment** in child care is clearly **part of the solution** to achieve broader economic and social benefits.

Recommendations

Based on this analysis, the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum recommends that:

1. The 2007/08 federal budget include a commitment to sustained multiyear federal funding to provinces and territories to begin building child care systems. The long-term goal of this investment is to move away from a system that relies primarily on user-fees to a publicly funded child care system that meets the needs of all families who need or choose to use it.
2. As a starting place, the 2007/08 federal budget include a commitment of \$5 billion from the federal government over five years in support of provincial/territorial child care action plans that include capital expansion of child care and sustained stable operating funds to ensure affordability and quality of existing and new spaces.
3. The \$250 million designated for the proposed Child Care Space Initiative be rolled into the over-all federal commitment to ensure that all new spaces created are tied to community needs and are sustainable.
4. Effective income supports for Canadian families be enhanced by incorporating the new taxable family allowance for children under the age of 6 into the Canada Child Tax Benefit and expanding this benefit to include children from 6 - 12 years of age.

The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum looks forward to meeting with the Standing Committee on Finance in Vancouver on October 3rd to answer questions and discuss our analysis and recommendations.

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Dear Parents,

Recently, Minister Linda Reid sent you a letter about BC's response to the loss of \$455 million in federal money for child care. While Minister Reid hopes that her letter will reassure you, the real message is that there is a **serious threat** to regulated child care in BC.

As you know, your child care program depends on fees that you and other parents pay. Some of you receive a 'child care subsidy' to help cover part of your fees and at least Minister Reid has promised to maintain current subsidy rates and eligibility levels.

But, your child care program also relies on the **Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF)**. The exact amount your family, group or school age child care program receives depends on who attends. For example, a daycare centre with 25 three to five year olds gets almost \$45,000 a year through CCOF. Without these funds, this centre would have to raise parent fees by \$150 a month per child just to meet current costs. This would consume your new federal \$100 monthly benefit and more.

Clearly child care programs across BC need these operating dollars. **Yet, the best Minister Reid can promise is that BC will 'endeavour' to maintain CCOF until the end of this school year.**

Without some certainty about the future of CCOF, child care programs have to start planning now for how they will manage in a few months.

We don't want to be alarmist but we are not assured and don't think you can be either. **Together, let's tell Minister Reid that this isn't good enough.** Parents and providers need to know that operating funds will be there to next July and beyond. Here's what you can do.

- ✓ Talk with your child care provider and other parents about what the threat to operating funds means for your program.
- ✓ Send the government a strong message that with or without federal child care funds, BC must maintain and improve CCOF.
- ✓ Complete BC's on-line budget survey. 'Q4' is a good place to say that next year's budget **must** protect child care funds. Go to <https://www.leg.bc.ca/budgetconsultations/survey.asp> for details.

Use this message – or better yet – write your own.

***With or without federal dollars, BC families need quality, affordable child care.
The province can and must maintain and enhance operating funds for child care in next year's budget and beyond.***

Send your message to:

Your MLA – MLA contact info at <http://www.leg.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm>

Gordon Campbell, the Premier at premier@gov.bc.ca

Carole Taylor, the Minister of Finance at carole.taylor.mla@leg.bc.ca

Linda Reid, Minister of State for Child Care at linda.reid.mla@leg.bc.ca

Claire Trevena, Opposition Child Care Critic at claire.trevena.mla@leg.bc.ca

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AN OPEN LETTER TO MINISTER REID BC's Minister of State for Child Care

November 2006

Dear Minister Reid,

The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum is responding to the invitation in your inaugural Reid Report to share our ideas, issues and concerns.

As BC's Minister of State for Child Care, one of your top priorities is the imminent threat to child care posed by the loss of \$455 million in federal child care transfers. So, when the first Reid Report arrived, we fully expected that it would include your concrete plans to protect and improve child care for BC children and families.

Imagine our shock to find that the only mention of 'child care' in the Newsletter is as one of the services that might be included in future 'neighbourhood hubs'. The rest of the Newsletter focuses on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Booster Seats.

Are Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Booster Seats important? You bet they are! Are they child care? Absolutely not! **This lack of leadership, focus and action on child care is not new.** Let's review the evidence:

2001-2005

2001/02 Baseline Budget

BC's investment in child care programs including Supported Child Care

- Starting in 2002/03, BC cut over \$40 million from its own annual spending on child care subsidies to low income parents and operating funds to licensed child care. Additional cuts were also made to other child care related budget items. Fees increased, programs closed, wages declined and affordable, quality child care became further out of reach for thousands of BC families.

BC's own investment in child care programs reduced

- Throughout these five years, the province received a total of \$289 million in federal transfers for early childhood development, which could include child care, but in BC none of these funds were used to restore the child care budget.
- In 2003, a second federal Multilateral transfer (MLF) agreement actually required provinces to invest in regulated early learning and child care, providing some reinvestment in child care services in BC.
- By 2005/06 these federal transfers partially restored BC's child care budget.

Running \$s (in millions) ¹

\$240

- \$50 (Provincial cut)

\$190

+ \$30 (Federal MLF \$s)

Fall 2005

- After decades of advocacy by communities, the federal government signed Agreements on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) with BC and all other provinces. BC was to receive \$633 million over 5 years dedicated to regulated child care services.
- BC announced immediate plans to spend \$30 million of the \$92 million it received in the first year of this ELCC Agreement (2005/06) to restore child care subsidy rates and eligibility levels and to make minor increases to child care operating funds.

2005/06 Revised Total Child Care Program Budget with federal and provincial dollars

- The BC government held community consultations about how best to spend the rest of the federal funds.
- The Consultation affirmed key positions of the Child Care Advocacy Forum including:
 - Access to quality child care must be a priority.
 - Child care operating funding is the top priority.
 - Wages, working conditions and professional development opportunities must be improved to recruit and retain skilled staff.
- The province promised to release a provincial Child Care Action Plan by Jan. 31, 2006 based on this input. To date, no BC Child Care Action Plan has been released.

Early 2006

- The 2006/07 provincial budget included \$127 million in additional federal child care transfer funds as part of overall increases in the budget of the Ministry of Children and Family Development. While the Minister of Finance called this a Children's Budget, no provincial funds were restored to child care and no plans for the additional federal child care funds were provided.

2006/07 Total Child Care Program Budget with federal and provincial dollars

- The new minority Federal government announced it would cancel the ELCC Agreements as of March 31, 2007. Unlike other Premiers who spoke up on behalf of their Agreements, BC's Premier was silent. The ELCC Agreement did not make his list of 'priorities' for discussion with the new federal government.
- Similarly, BC's Minister of Finance was silent on the loss of the remaining \$455 million in child care transfer payments for 2007/08 to 2009/10, saying that the 2006/07 federal budget met BC's priorities. She has since refused to meet with the Child Care Advocacy Forum to discuss the pending crisis.

Fall 2006

- You wrote to parents and caregivers about child care. In spite of \$127 million in new child care federal funds still on your books for this year, all you could offer was that current subsidy rates and eligibility levels would be maintained and that your government would 'endeavour' to maintain other child care funding, including child care operating funds, until the end of the school year. Parents and caregivers were not assured!
- In the media you say that you don't know how you will spend the additional \$127 million in federal funds because not all subsidy applications are in yet. This is misleading at best. There is no deadline for subsidy applications. This has never stopped successive BC governments from making annual subsidy budget allocations – presumably based on past expenditures, informed projections and regular monitoring. With only five months left in the year, surely it's time to tell BC how you plan to spend all of this year's child care program budget.

+ \$30 (Federal ELCC \$s)

\$250

+ \$127 (Federal ELCC & MFL \$s)

**\$377 (\$190 provincial
(\$187 federal))**

Running \$\$s (in millions) ¹

- \$141

\$236

\$190

0

+ 46

\$236

Where does this leave us for 2007/08?

- Given BC's lack of action on child care, it looks like the cancellation of the ELCC federal transfers will mean further cuts to child care funding in BC of \$141 million.
- Unless the provincial contributions to child care programs are restored and increased, BC's child care program budget for 2007/08 could be reduced to \$236 million
- Here's why:
 - BC has made no commitment to increase its own child care spending
 - ELCC funds will stop.
 - BC will only receive \$46 million under the federal MLF funds.

Projected 2007/08 Child Care Program Budget

AFTER 6 YEARS – BC CHILD CARE SPENDING IS ONLY BACK AT 2001/02 LEVELS AND ALL THE REINVESTMENTS ARE STILL BEING PAID FOR WITH FEDERAL FUNDS.

Table Summarizing Running Numbers

Unless provincial contributions to child care programs are restored and increased, here's what could happen in 2007/08:

Summary of BC Child Care Program Funding, including Supported Child Development

(\$ millions)

	2001/02	change	2005/06	change	2006/07	change	2007/08?
Total Provincial Contribution to Child Care Programs	240	-50	190	0	190	0	190
Add: Federal Transfers designated for child care:							
2003 Multilateral Framework (MLF)	0	30	30	10	40	6	46
2005 Agreement (ELCC) (net of carry forward amounts)	0	30	30	117	147	-147	0
Total Federal Contribution	0	60	60	127	187	-141	46
TOTAL BC CHILD CARE PROGRAM BUDGET	240	10	250	127	377	-141	236

¹ Figures are derived from federal and provincial public reports and web sites, and most have been cross-reconciled to within \$5 million from multiple sources. Minor rounding differences may occur.

So, Minister Reid, do you want to know our issues and concerns?

BC children, families and child care providers are paying the price because:

1. BC is not committed to building the child care system children and families need.
2. BC has no plan for child care.
3. Operating funds to licensed family and group child care centers are at risk.
4. There is a critical shortage of qualified early childhood educators in BC, undermining the quality and viability of child care programs.
5. BC's fragile child care services are being further destabilized by inaction and uncertainty.

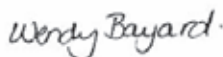
Do you want to know our ideas and suggestions?

With or without federal funds:

1. Use BC's current and projected surplus to make an immediate commitment to maintain the total 2006/07 child care budget in 2007/08.
2. As the community advised a year ago, develop a BC Child Care Action Plan that addresses quality, affordability, access and expansion.
3. Implement a 5 year funding strategy to support this Plan with dedicated operating and capital funds that move child care from a user fee system to a publicly funded system.



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Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre



Wendy Bayard
Western Canada Family Child Care Association



Maryann Bird
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC



Darcelle Cottons
BC Association of Child Care Employers



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BC Child Care Cuts - What Has This Government Got Against Working Families? January 2007

The child care cuts announced by Linda Reid, BC's Minister of State for Child Care, on Jan. 7/07 are an attack on working families – not an economic decision! (For Minister Reid's letter and more information on the cuts see www.advocacyforum.bc.ca, www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare and www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/documents/2007/Financial_FS_Jan_07_Final_2.pdf.)

Minister Reid blames the federal government. She says that their decision to cancel the Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC), at a cost of \$455 million in dedicated child care transfer payments to BC, "presents the province with a challenge". But – a look at the facts indicates that the real 'challenge' is the provincial government's **unwillingness to support working families and their children**. Here's why:

1. **The cuts clearly target working families with children.**

Minister Reid is cutting Child Care Operating Funds (CCOF) that go directly to licensed group and family child care programs. She says child care programs can cover the loss by raising parent fees and that parents can use the \$100 pre tax monthly family allowance from the federal government to pay higher fees.

Minister Reid is also cutting 77% of the budget for Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRRs) Programs that support working families and their working caregivers. As a result, CCRRs as we know them will cease to exist.

Here's what she doesn't say:

- **Working families already pay thousands of dollars a year** for child care out of their own pockets. Most families can't afford the fees now. Higher fees will put quality child care out of the reach of even more families and their children.
- **The new \$100 family allowance is taxable income** for the lowest earning parent in a family. At-home parents will pay minimal taxes no matter how high the family's income. Single and two parent working families who need child care will be taxed at a higher level.
- **While child care is being cut**, BC is using federal child care funds to launch new early learning programs **that do not meet the needs of working families**.
- Although **Strong Start** - the newest 'early learning program' - is publicly funded, free, universally accessible, staffed by trained and well paid early childhood educators and unlike most child care in schools pays no rent – the very elements of the child care system working families need – **it is a part day program that only serves children who can attend with a parent or other adult caregiver**.
- These programs are not required to introduce or raise parent fees. **Families who use these programs will not have to use their \$100 family allowance** to pay for early learning programs for their children.
- **Working families and their working caregivers will lose** community-based access to referrals for regulated and legal child care as well as help in applying for child care subsidies when CCRRs are dismantled.

Only licensed child care programs have to raise fees.

Only working families have to pay more for quality programs.

2. BC has the money to fund child care. What's lacking is the will.

Minister Reid blames the cancellation of the Federal – Provincial Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) for the cuts to child care. Under the ELCC Agreement, signed in Sept. 2005, BC was to receive \$633 million from the federal government over 5 years to begin building a child care system. BC received \$178 million under the first two years of the Agreement. Then the current federal government cancelled the remaining 3 years of the Agreement at a loss to BC of \$455 million dedicated to child care.

Here's what Minister Reid doesn't say:

- BC cut over \$40 million from its own child care spending in 2002.
- BC did not spend one cent of the initial federal transfer dollars for early childhood development on child care
- BC was one of the last provinces to sign the 2005 Agreement because they held out for provincial autonomy
- BC did not develop a Child Care Action Plan as required under the ELCC Agreement, even though communities provided strong and consistent advice that child care was the priority.
- BC invested very little of the ELCC dollars they did receive on sustained funding for child care.
- BC ignored school-aged care because they couldn't use federal dollars for children over 6.
- BC was silent when the new federal government cancelled the ELCC Agreement.
- BC is not using any of its \$2 billion plus projected surplus for child care.
- BC is using funds that should build a child care system to pay 'closing out' costs of CCRR programs.
- BC is not cutting any other social, health, educational or economic programs.

The evidence is clear. BC only cares about child care when someone else foots the bill. If the federal government won't do it – the province will make working families pay.

Communities are not fooled by BC's attempt to pass the buck. Parents, caregivers and communities are speaking up. That's what will make the difference. **Here's what you can do.**

- 1. On Feb. 6 and beyond - take action.** Feb. 6 is the first anniversary of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's swearing in. This is a great day to profile the cuts to child care in every community in BC.
- 2. Make the Cuts Visible.** The time is past for communities, caregivers and parents to help cover the impact of the cuts or to help government make the cuts. Do what you can to make the cuts visible to others in the community.
- 3. Demand action.** Elected officials work for YOU!

Tell your MLA to stop the attack on BC's working families.
Contact them at <http://www.leg.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm>

Tell Premier Campbell that with or without federal funds you hold him accountable for the crisis in child care. Contact him at Premier@gov.bc.ca

Tell Carole Taylor, BC's Minister of Finance, that she has the money to restore child care funding in the 2007/08 budget she will table on Feb. 20.
Contact her at carole.taylor.mla@leg.bc.ca

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A Summary of BC Child Care Cuts and Impacts

January 2007

On January 5, 2007 Linda Reid, BC's Minister of State for Child Care, announced devastating cuts to BC child care programs. Over 9 months beginning April 1, 2007 a total of \$35 – \$40 million will be cut with the following impacts.

CUT – 27% less for **Child Care Operating Funds** (CCOF) for children under 6.
IMPACT – Parent fees will rise. Fewer families will be able to afford quality care.

CCOF provides relatively small but critically important operating grants to licensed group and family child care programs for every enrolled child. After drastically reducing direct operating funds to child care in 2002, CCOF rates were marginally increased for children under the age of 6 in September 2005. The government fully expects the cost of these cuts to be made up through increases in parent fees.

CUT – 78% less for **Child Care Resource and Referral Programs** (CCRR).
IMPACT – CCRRs as communities know them will cease to exist.

CCRRs are the public face of child care in communities across BC. They provide parents with referrals to child care programs, they help families apply for Child Care Subsidies, they recruit and support caregivers to improve quality through outreach and training and they provide information about child care to the community at large. The cut in annual funding from \$14 to \$3 million a year cannot even begin to cover these services. The loss of CCRRs services at the local level will negatively impact subsidy uptake.

CUT – **Major Child Care Capital Funding** stopped.
IMPACT – No new child care spaces will be built. Wait lists will get longer.

Major capital child care funding from the province covers a portion of the total capital budget required to create new spaces. Community organizations already need to raise additional capital funds to create new spaces. In 2004, there was a licensed child care space for only 13% of children from birth to twelve years of age and a recent survey of some BC child care programs indicates wait lists of up to 2 years for existing services. A cut of \$7 million in major capital funding means that the shortage will only get worse.

CUT – An **'intake cap' on access to CCOF** for new spaces.
IMPACT – New child care spaces will be more expensive and less sustainable.

Even if communities find capital dollars to create child care spaces, they cannot count on CCOF grants to offset parent fees. This will be another disincentive for expansion of licensed spaces. Any new spaces that are created will have fees that only the most affluent families can afford - the very opposite impact of government's stated intention to ensure the needs of vulnerable families are met.

At the same time as government is cutting sustaining child care funding they are wasting dollars that could build a real child care system.

WASTE – \$40 million on undefined one-time-only 'quality' improvements.
IMPACT – BC will move unspent federal child care funds off their books by March 31. The only criteria will be that the funds ARE NOT USED TO MAKE A LASTING DIFFERENCE.

WASTE – An unknown amount to 'buy out' CCRR leases and cover layoff costs.
IMPACT – While children wait for quality care, parents pay ever-rising fees, and early childhood educators lose their jobs – government will spend dedicated child care dollars to shut programs down. And there are many more millions of federal child care dollars that the province has yet to account for!

For more information see
www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/documents/2007/Financial_FS_Jan_07_Final_2.pdf and the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum website at www.advocacyforum.bc.ca

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FOR THE RECORD – Child Care in BC What They Say – What They Don't Say March 2007

On Jan. 5, 2007 Linda Reid, BC's Minister of State for Child Care, announced substantial cuts in child care funding. (For a summary of the cuts and their impact see http://advocacyforum.bc.ca/pdf/CCcuts_summary_jan07.pdf)

Since then, tens of thousands of parents, child care providers and community members from all walks of life have raised their voices to oppose these cuts. In communities across BC, they have written letters, signed petitions, attended Town Hall meetings, visited MLAs and MPs and joined rallies and protests.

Despite province-wide action, the provincial Throne Speech was silent on child care. And, while community efforts are credited with government's recent reversal of its initial plan to make even further cuts to the Child Care Resource and Referral Program (CCRR) budget, the fact remains that the child care provincial budget for 2007/08 will still be reduced by more than \$100 million compared to 2006/07. Overall, it still appears that child care is the only program area facing significant reduced spending in the coming year's budget.

The programmed responses you are likely to hear from government members in your community can be found in two government documents:

- A one pager "FOR THE RECORD – Child Care in BC" originally published February 19, 2007 then modified on February 28, 2007 to reflect government's backtracking on CCRRs.
- The Reid Report #3 – circulated by email on March 1 describing the use of one time only funds.

(Both documents are available at <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/index.htm>)

These documents claim to provide the facts regarding recent changes to child care in BC. However, they fail to mention many of the critical facts that paint the real picture.

As the information below clearly demonstrates, this government's words about child care do not match their actions. Rather, their action and inaction on child care over the last 6 years consistently reflect a disregard for BC's working families and their children and an anything but child care bias that in today's economic climate seems incomprehensible to more and more British Columbians.

But, it's not too late to let them know that ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. As we are now beginning to see, when governments clearly understand that the public is demanding action - they find the political will and resources to get on with the job.

Now is the time to move child care to the top of their list! Yes, they need to fully restore **all** of the child care funds they plan to cut. But that's only a start. With or without federal funds, they need to commit adequate resources to build the publicly funded child care system BC families need and deserve.

What they say	What they don't say
<p>“As of March 31, 2007 the federal government will cancel the 2005 Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, representing a loss of \$455 million over 3 years.”</p>	<p>BC is just waking up to the failure of the federal government on child care. Unlike other provinces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BC did not put the ELCC Agreement on their list of priorities with the new federal government. ▪ BC did not speak up publicly in support of the ELCC Agreement they signed. ▪ BC's Minister of Finance refused to meet with representatives of the Child Care Advocacy Forum about her plans in the face of the \$455 million loss in dedicated child care funding. <p>BC is the only province to announce cuts to child care as a result of the federal cuts. All other provinces are at least maintaining current spending levels.</p> <p>BC could easily maintain current spending levels because they never committed the full \$455 million expected through the ELCC Agreement (\$152 million/year) to ongoing child care programs.</p> <p>At most, BC would have to commit about \$100 million over the next 3 years (\$35 million/year) to maintain current funding levels.</p>
<p>“As a result, as of July 1st the federal portion of the Child Care Operating Fund, an average of \$40 per month per child, will no longer flow to child care providers.”</p>	<p>The decision to reduce Child Care Operating Funds (CCOF) was a provincial decision.</p> <p>With over \$2 billion in surplus this year, BC has more than enough money to maintain current and improve CCOF rates.</p> <p>This cut means that child care fees will go up even though child care already costs families more than post-secondary education.</p> <p>The average loss of \$40 per month is only for group care for children from 3-5 years old.</p> <p>The average loss for group infant and toddler care is \$80 per month.</p>
<p>“Instead, the federal government is flowing money directly to parents through the \$100 a month Universal Child (sic) Benefit.”</p>	<p>Where was BC when communities said this ‘taxable’ family allowance was not a replacement for a child care system?</p> <p>It appears that BC agrees that a direct payment to parents is better than investing in system building.</p> <p>Stan Hagan, former Minister of MCFD who negotiated BC's ELCC Agreement told the community that he tried to get the federal government to let him ‘flow’ the money directly to parents rather than spend it on regulated child care services.</p> <p>Liberal MLA Randy Hawes says that “...it is reasonable to expect them (parents) to pay a portion of the new federal childcare funding toward childcare.”</p> <p>The government can't have it both ways. They can't blame the cuts to child care on the federal government if they agree with the federal government's decisions.</p>

What they say	What they don't say
<p>"Despite these Federal Funding changes the province will continue to provide more than \$50 million in Child Care Operating Funds."</p>	<p>\$50 million is also the amount that BC cut from its own annual funding for child care, starting in 2002. As a result, the overall budget for child care program operating funds was cut by 20%. Federal funds replaced some of these provincial cuts, but now that the federal funds are disappearing BC is not prepared to restore its previous cuts to maintain the program.</p>
<p>"In fact, the provincial government has budgeted over \$250 million for child care services in 2007/08."</p>	<p>The only 'fact' here is that BC isn't going to make any further cuts in its own spending. After administration, about \$241 million in total is budgeted for child care programs in 2007/08, thanks to \$47 million in federal transfers remaining in the last year of the 2003 Multilateral Framework Agreement. That means BC will contribute about \$194 million of its own funds for child care next year – almost \$50 million less than the \$240 million the province contributed in 2001/02. This overall budget is only back to 2001/02 levels because BC still has some federal early learning money. If the province isn't prepared to replace its own spending next year – things could be even worse.</p>
<p>"In October 2005 the province significantly increased child care subsidy rates as well as the income threshold from \$21,000 to \$38,000." "We also enhanced funding for the Supported Child Development (SCD) program by a significant level."</p>	<p>These reinvestments in child care subsidy came after BC made significant cuts to the subsidy program in 2002 – the only time in Canadian history that a province reduced child care subsidy eligibility levels. As a result, a generation of preschool aged children from low and modest income families lost their only opportunity to attend quality child care programs. Perhaps this is the reason vulnerability levels for BC children entering kindergarten in 2005/06 have generally increased from three years ago. The child care subsidy budget for 2007/08 is only now back to 2001/02 levels. The increase in income thresholds was long overdue. Yet, this government waited years to make a change. In spite of government's claim that they are protecting vulnerable children – MCFD service plans indicate that they only expect to provide subsidies for 24,480 children next year. Yet, previous public reporting indicates that approximately 37,000 BC children received subsidies in 2001. Children with extra support needs can only be included in quality child care if their families can find or afford it. But BC only has licensed spaces for less than 15% of our children.</p>

What they say	What they don't say
<p><i>On February 19, 2007, they said:</i></p> <p>"In order to ensure these significant enhancements to subsidy and SCD are maintained we made the difficult decision to reframe Child Care Resource and Referral services in the province."</p> <p>"...CCRRs only assist 25% of families applying for subsidy. A new provincial centre handles 26,000 calls a month."</p>	<p>Government's initial plan to cut the annual provincial budget for CCRR services from \$14 million to \$3 million was a decision to decimate CCRR services – not a decision to reframe them.</p> <p>CCRRs provide support, resources and referral services for child care providers and parents and promote quality child care choices. A 'provincial call centre' cannot provide these services.</p> <p>25% of families who got help with their subsidy application through CCRRs adds up to over 5000 families. So much for government's claim they are protecting the most vulnerable families.</p> <p>Last year, CCRRs were told to expand services, open store front offices and serve more communities. Yet, when the cuts were announced government seemed prepared to spend millions of federal child care dollars to cover the costs of closing some of these very services.</p>
<p><i>On February 28, 2007, government changed its position on CCRRs and now says:</i></p> <p>"The provincial CCRR budget of \$9 million will be maintained on an ongoing basis. We will work with CCRRs to reframe the service to focus on BC's most vulnerable families."</p>	<p>The only fact here is that after cutting \$5 million from the annual CCRR budget (\$14 million to \$9 million) government is not going to make any further cuts.</p> <p>This decision is an inadequate response to mounting pressure for full restoration of child care funding.</p> <p>This is not the only example of chaos in government's plans for CCRR services. Since 2002, CCRRs were told to prepare for no funding, then they were told to expand services, then they were told to get ready to close again and now – their services are to be reframed in yet another direction.</p> <p>To date, government is unable to provide any explanation of this latest reframe.</p>
<p>"Since 2005, we have invested over \$14 million to build almost 1,500 new government funded licensed child care spaces across BC."</p>	<p>Through their capital grant program, government only paid some of the cost of building these spaces. Most communities had to raise at least 50% of the capital costs from other sources.</p> <p>Government does not report on lost spaces so this is not a net figure. A 2005 report shows that for every 10 licensed family and centre-based programs that opened, 9 closed within 4 years (Kershaw, 2005).</p> <p>With reduced operating funds available, and without a plan to address staff recruitment and retention issues, how many of these spaces can actually afford to open their doors and stay open?</p> <p>Government has frozen spending under its 'major child care capital' grant program and capped access to CCOF for new spaces that communities find ways to open. Either there is a need for expansion or not.</p>

What they say	What they don't say
<p><i>In the Reid Report #3, they added:</i></p> <p>“...an additional \$40-million in existing ELCC funding will be made available to current CCOF-funded child care providers to allow for quality improvement investments in professional development, minor capital improvements, equipment and supplies...”</p> <p>“...the first \$20 million will be moving out to CCOF funded operators as early as the week of March 5th, 2007.”</p> <p>“Details regarding the distribution of the remaining \$20 million are currently being finalized and that information should be available to providers in the coming weeks.”</p>	<p>\$40 million is more than enough to maintain current child care spending next year without making any cuts. \$20 million is more than enough to cover the cuts government is making to CCOF next year.</p> <p>Every CCOF funded operator is wrestling with cuts to their operating budget due to CCOF cuts.</p> <p>Most have no choice but to raise parent fees knowing that these increases will make their services available only to increasingly affluent families but still won't generate enough funds to retain quality staff.</p> <p>Now, while facing mounting operating pressures, child care operators will receive one time only money for professional development, toys and equipment that only the luckiest children can benefit from – a situation that belies government's claim they are protecting the most vulnerable.</p> <p>For the 3rd year in a row, BC was unable to invest scarce child care funds in ways that sustain and develop a system. As a result, another fiscal year ends with 'announcements' of one-time-only expenditures that do not bring fees down, do not address the labour force crisis and do not build a system.</p>
<p><i>BC is still silent on the remaining 'unspent' federal ELCC dollars.</i></p>	<p>As 2006/07 comes to an end, BC has still not told British Columbians how it has spent or plans to spend the \$86 million in federal transfers provided to the province in 2006/07 specifically as a termination payment, because of the now-cancelled 2005 Agreement on ELCC. Other provinces are using these funds to maintain existing funding levels in future years, but obviously this is not happening in BC.</p> <p>Instead, BC is funding 80 Strong Start 'early learning' programs for pre-school children, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education. These programs are free, universally accessible, located rent free in schools and staffed by decently compensated early childhood educators.</p> <p>These are the very elements of a quality child care system that BC needs with one key exception. Children attending Strong Start programs must come with a parent or other caregiver.</p> <p>Strong Start and other 'marquee' early learning programs are clearly not designed with the needs of working families – the majority of BC families – in mind.</p> <p>In BC, only working families now have to pay more for quality early learning programs.</p>

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Premier Gordon Campbell
PO Box 9041
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC
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April 2007

Dear Premier Campbell,

It is with a troubling sense of foreboding that 5 organizational members of the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum are writing to express our disbelief at the recent, arbitrary and totally unnecessary cuts your government is making to the provincial services offered by our sister organization – Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre.

For 20 years, Westcoast has played a vital role in the child care community in BC. Yet, seemingly at the drop of a hat, the results of two decades of hard work and exemplary service at the provincial level will vanish as of April 30, 2007.

- The largest early childhood education and child care related library in Western Canada – gone.
- Diversity resources and training to promote inclusive culturally appropriate child care – gone.
- Financial and administrative resources and training for providers and organizations across BC – gone.
- Accurate, up-to-date responses to questions about child care from parents, caregivers, the public, and governments – gone.

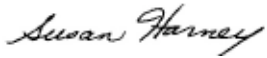
You were a strong public supporter of Westcoast during its early years so you know what the loss of these services means for parents, providers and the community at large. The decision to cut \$800,000 in provincial services delivered by Westcoast is one more example of ill conceived, last minute decisions that plague your government's child care branch. If after 20 years of providing valuable service, an organization like Westcoast can be given 6 weeks notice to shut down its provincial services without any warning, without any review of the value of its services, without any opportunity to discuss the decision, without any transparent or accountable process – then no child care service in BC is safe.

Your government's inability or unwillingness to implement a plan that builds a child care system is wreaking havoc in communities. One day, cuts are made to funds that sustain child care programs. The next, millions are spent on one time only expenditures that don't build a system. In January, we are told that federal funds have to be spent by fiscal year end. March 31 comes and goes with no public accounting for millions of federal child care dollars still on the table. All the while, children, families and providers are left to hold it together as best they can.

All of this would be less heartbreaking if it weren't so unnecessary. BC has a healthy surplus and can afford to invest in our children. And, Minister Solberg, the federal minister responsible for child care, has said that it's up to the provinces to decide how to spend child care funds from the 2007/08 federal budget. So, BC will receive more than enough funding to restore the recent child care cuts.

We trust you understand that what takes decades to build can be destroyed in a moment. As Premier, we are calling on you to intervene before it's too late. Make child care a priority and assure British Columbians that the chaos will end now.

Sincerely,



Susan Harney
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC



Wendy Bayard
Western Canada Family Child Care Association



Diane Tannahill
Early Childhood Educators of BC



Darcelle Cottons
BC Association of Child Care Employers



Astrid Visscher
School Age Child Care Association

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May IS Child Care Month May 2007

Since 1982, the child care community has marked May as *Child Care Month*. Over these 25 years, *Child Care Month* has been a time to raise the profile of child care in our communities, a time to highlight the important role that quality child care plays in the lives of children, families and communities and a time to pay tribute to the tireless work of BC's child care providers.

Sometimes, when child care funds are cut, when progress is rolled back, it's difficult to feel like celebrating. In many ways – that's the case this year.

Since the last federal election – children, families and child care services in BC have faced one attack after another. First, the new federal government cancelled the Federal-Provincial Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care at a loss of over \$455 million in dedicated child care funds to BC.

Then, BC followed suit by becoming the only province in Canada to make child care cuts in the face of lost federal dollars. BC reduced support for programs like the Child Care Operating Fund that help sustain quality child care in this province, at the same time as they scrambled to spend over \$80 million on one-time-only funds that don't and won't build a system. (For more on BC's child care cuts go to www.advocacyforum.bc.ca).

But – as child care providers across the province help children learn every day – we can only be responsible for our own behaviour. And, on that front there is much to celebrate.

That is why the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum joins others this year by reclaiming child care month as a celebration of the strength, the resiliency and the tenacity of our community.

In spite of government's attacks:

- ✓ Communities are speaking up and out for child care like never before
- ✓ Support for our [Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care Services in BC](#) continues to grow
- ✓ New voices, including Mayors, School Boards, Health Officers and others are letting government know that child care is a solution.

As federal and provincial politicians get ready to head home for the summer ***Child Care Month 2007 is the time to say loudly and proudly that we are strong, we are together and we are not going away!***

This is what the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum is celebrating with you this year. We share your anger, we applaud your courage and we promise to keep at it until the day when together we can celebrate the child care system that BC children, families and communities need and deserve.

Provincial Child Care Funding Rates are still going DOWN

On June 28, 2007, Minister Linda Reid, BC's Minister of State for Child Care issued a media release titled "PROVINCE INCREASES CHILD CARE FUNDING RATES" in which she announced new Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) rates for infant and toddler spaces in licensed group and family care as of July 1, 2007.

To set the record straight:

- On January 8, 2007 Minister Reid announced a series of cuts to child care funding in BC.
- These included cuts to CCOF for all types of care for children under the age of 6 effective July 1, 2007.
- The biggest cuts were to CCOF rates of Infant and Toddler spaces.
- From January to June, communities across BC sent government a consistent message that the cuts were harmful and unnecessary.
- At the same time, providers and parents across BC prepared for the worst. Many programs had no choice but to raise fees to cover CCOF cuts.
- Days before the cuts were to come into effect, Minister Reid backtracked on the size of the CCOF cuts for infant/toddler care.
- This demonstrates that community action does make a difference!
- But, as the table below shows, her reversal has NOT led to increased child care funding.
- **CCOF rates for Infant/Toddler care are still going down on July 1 and fees are still going up.**

Analysis of BC Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) Rates								
for children in licensed group centres, preschools and family child care programs								
CCOF Rates	1 Actual until June 30 2007		2 Announced Jan 5/07 Jul 1/07 - Mar 31/08		3 Announced Jun 20/07 Jul 1/07 - Mar 31/08		Actual Funding Decrease (column 3 - 1)	
	Daily	Mthly**	Daily	Mthly**	Daily	Mthly**	Mthly**	%
<i>Children under 3*:</i>								
group centres	\$14.04	\$295	\$10.28	\$216	\$12.00	\$252	(\$43)	-15%
family child care	4.34	91	3.18	67	3.70	78	(13)	-15%
<i>Preschools</i>	1.87	39	1.37	29	1.37	29	(11)	-27%
<i>Children aged 3-5*:</i>								
group centres	7.48	157	5.48	115	5.48	115	(42)	-27%
family child care	3.86	81	2.82	59	2.82	59	(22)	-27%
<i>School aged children*:</i>								
group centres	2.80	59	2.80	59	2.80	59	0	
family child care	1.46	31	1.46	31	1.46	31	0	

*care for more than 4 hours/day; funding changes consistent to those shown above for care < 4 hours/day
 **based on 21 days/month

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No Foreign Ownership of BC Child Care

October 2007

The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum is adding our voice to growing concerns across BC about recent child care developments. We have learned that a foreign-owned corporation is trying to buy out BC child care providers. The same corporation is also making similar efforts in Alberta and Ontario.

This is not an idle threat. 123 Busy Beavers Learning Centres, the company behind the buy out push, is organized and moving quickly. The Calgary Herald reported on Oct. 24 that "at least one large provider in Calgary is believed to have sold some or all of its facilities, effective Nov. 1, to (this) company." We also know that several BC child care operators have been approached.

The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum is clear that foreign owned corporate child care is NOT the kind of child care that BC children, families or communities want or need. This is not the kind of child care that promotes our Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care Services in BC. (www.advocacyforum.bc.ca/common_agenda.html)

If this foreign take-over proceeds, it will change the face of child care in BC. It will put shareholders' profits first – before community planning, integrated service delivery and responsiveness to the diverse needs of families and communities. In other places where this kind of child care now dominates, parent fees have gone up, service gaps continue and there are concerns about quality.

This may be the most pressing danger the BC child care community has ever faced.

That is why the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum supports the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC's campaign to say NO to foreign control of community-based child care in BC.

Minister Linda Reid's announcement on October 1, 2007 that the BC Major Child Care Capital Funding Program is now open to private child care operators only adds to our concern. **Public funds should not subsidize profits for foreign shareholders.**

Stay tuned to the *BC Child Care — NOT FOR SALE* campaign at www.cccabc.bc.ca for up to date information and actions.

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CORPORATE CHILD CARE

Recently, Linda Reid, BC's Minister of State for Child Care, wrote provincial child care organizations and appeared in the media to assure British Columbians that it was not her intent to open the door to corporate child care in BC. This is good news if it means the BC government agrees with the community that corporate child care is not the solution to BC's child care crisis.

Minister Reid says that perhaps we are misinformed about her government's current policies and suggests the following rationale should put our concerns to rest:

- The \$12.5 million in major child care capital funds that is now available to private companies can only be used to create new spaces – not to buy existing spaces.
- The 'overwhelming majority' of group child care spaces in BC are operated by non-profit societies. Non-profit societies are prohibited from being converted to corporations or from allowing associated individuals to benefit from the sale of society assets.
- The recent decision to make public capital funds available to the private sector reflects the voices of providers, professionals and families.

To set the record straight:

- The child care community fully understands current policy but is still not assured by Minister Reid's rationale.
- Even though corporations cannot use public capital funding to buy existing centres, once established in BC they can use public funds to operate and expand.
- The most recent public records available show that only 60% of child care spaces in BC are non-profit*. Minister Reid should define what constitutes an 'overwhelming majority' and provide current data to back that up.
- The rules for non-profit societies do not prevent them from selling their child care programs to corporations.
- There is no record of public consultations on child care that support corporate child care. Rather, the public record indicates widespread support for making child care more affordable for parents, improving quality through increased wages and ensuring accountability for public funds as the way forward.
- **To really assure British Columbians that government is not encouraging corporate child care, Minister Reid needs to implement sound public policies and accountable public funding that build a high quality, affordable child care system that meets the needs of all.**

* Friendly, Beach & Turiano, Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2001, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto.

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INCENTIVES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

In late 2007, the BC government announced two pilot programs which they say can help support the recruitment and retention of early childhood educators.

- A Student Loan Assistance program for Early Childhood Educators (ECE) who graduate in 2007 or 2008 and work in licensed child care for 2 years. They will receive up to \$1250 in each of 2 years to help pay back student loans.
- An Incentive Program for Early Childhood Educators who have not worked in licensed child care for at least 2 years. The first '100 returning' ECEs who apply can receive up to \$2500 at the end of each of their first 2 years of re-employment in licensed child care.

To set the record straight:

- In a 2007 survey of BC child care centres, 75% of respondents report that **low wages and lack of benefits** are the main reasons why it's hard to hire and keep staff.¹
- In 2001, one of the first acts of the newly elected provincial government was to **cut funds** that went directly into the wages of Early Childhood Educators. There has been little if any gain since 2001.²
- In 2006, the median gross hourly wage for BC's college-trained caregivers in group child care centres was \$12.58.³ Contrast this with the average hourly wage of \$20.39 for all BC workers 15 and over in the same year.⁴
- Since 2002, all Canadian provinces **other than BC** invested additional funds specifically to improve child care wages and benefits.
- BC's latest provincial 'pilots' **do nothing to improve wages or benefits for early childhood educators**. They also do nothing for the dedicated ECEs who have stayed in the field in spite of the low wages.
- **Government's acknowledgement of the province wide recruitment and retention crisis in child care is long overdue. But, to really make a difference, they need to dedicate funds to raise the wages and improve benefits for BC's new and experienced early childhood educators.**

¹ Results of Early Childhood Education Staffing Survey: October/November 2007, First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition

² While BC's reporting makes a direct comparison difficult, in 2001, the median gross hourly wage for a broader group of BC ECE 'teachers' was \$13.28. (Beach and Friendly, Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2001.)

³ Beach and Friendly, Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2006

⁴ Statistics Canada. Retrieved from <http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/labr69k.htm>

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BC'S CHILD CARE DELIVERABLES

On May 20, 2008 in response to a question from Claire Trevena (the Opposition Child Care Critic), Linda Reid, BC's Minister of State for Child Care said "Everything the sector (child care) has asked for has been delivered." On May 22, in response to a question about what parents who are losing their child care in Whistler are supposed to do, Minister Reid reiterated that her government has responded to the community's request for deliverables.

To set the record straight:

- In 2001/02, the province cut over \$40 million from its annual budget on child care. ***The province has yet to deliver on community requests that these funds be restored.***
- In 2007, BC was the only province to respond to the loss of dedicated federal child care dollars with more cuts to child care. ***The province has yet to deliver on community requests that these cuts be reversed.***
- In 2006/07, BC spent \$95.4 million of remaining federal child care funds on one-time-only expenditures — many of which had little if anything to do with child care. ***The province has yet to deliver on community requests for adequate, stable and accountable child care funding.***
- From 2001 to 2006, average annual child care fees for pre-school aged children in BC went up by \$672. For school-aged care, the increase was more than \$800.¹ ***The province has yet to deliver on community requests that child care fees come down.***
- In 2006, the median gross hourly wage for BC's college-trained caregivers in group child care centres was \$12.58.² ***The province has yet to deliver on community requests that providers' wages go up.***
- Since 2004, BC has separated planning and funding for child care from planning and funding for early learning. As a result, publicly funded early learning programs that do not meet the needs of working families are opening their doors while existing child care services struggle to keep theirs open. ***The province has yet to deliver on community requests that this split come to an end.***

While provinces like Manitoba and Alberta develop and implement Child Care Plans, BC has yet to deliver on the community's request for a 5 year plan with targets and timelines for building the child care system that BC children and families need and deserve.

¹ Beach and Friendly, Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2001 and 2006
² Beach and Friendly, Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2006.

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BC Child Care Advocacy Forum
Submission to Early Childhood Learning Agency Consultation
July 2008

The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum is an alliance of 6 provincial child care organizations that have worked together since 1999 to advance a Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care in BC. (http://www.advocacyforum.bc.ca/common_agenda.html)

The Advocacy Forum represents thousands of front-line providers and employers from all types of child care, families and concerned citizens. While each member organization advances independent positions of particular interest to their members, the positions adopted by the Forum reflect the highest level of consensus that exists within BC's child care community today.

The possible expansion of early learning programs for children aged 3-5 through BC's ministry of education is a significant public policy development that will impact the lives of children, families, caregivers and communities.

As the Early Childhood Learning Agency's Consultation Paper "*Expanding Early Learning in British Columbia for Children Aged 3-5*" highlights, we lag behind our trading partners in providing universal access to programs for young children.

But, whether expanded programs for BC's 3-5 year olds are designed and implemented in ways that meet the needs of children, families and communities depend on how government applies the evidence and lessons learned.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum offers the following advice on both the opportunities and challenges ahead.

The Opportunity

The key opportunity is clearly a recognition that the founding principles of our public education system – legislated entitlement, universality, and public funding – are equally important to sound public policy for younger children.

For over two decades, the need for a comprehensive system of quality programs that promote healthy childhood development and meet the needs of working families in BC has been well documented. Provincial, national and international research has all clearly demonstrated the economic and social benefits of public investment in universal programs for young children. Families, service providers, and communities have all called for appropriate policy and adequate funding to realize these benefits.

As the Consultation Paper highlights, this is consistent with "growing levels of interest in increasing universal access to quality early learning for children aged three to six..."¹ internationally, where many jurisdictions already provide or are moving towards providing free, universal access for 3, 4 and/or 5 year olds.

¹ *Expanding Early Learning in British Columbia for Children Aged 3-5*. Retrieved from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/ecla/topics/consultation_paper08.pdf

If an expansion of programs for BC's 3-5 year olds is based on these principles, it represents an historic opportunity to meet the needs of children and families in ways that strengthen the whole community.

This opportunity can be realized through legislating entitlement for all young children to equal access to publicly funded programs – just as we do now for older children.

The Challenges

There are 3 key challenges government needs to address if progress is to be achieved.

1. Meeting Children's Needs

The Consultation Paper affirms what families, caregivers and researchers have long known – early learning and care are NOT separate concepts. Quality child care IS early learning. Children learn in the context of caring relationships and play-based experiences that enable them to grow socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively.

As the Consultation Paper acknowledges, a downward extension of formal 'education' or a narrow focus on school readiness does not have desired results.

And yet, BC continues to separate its policy, planning and funding of 'early learning' programs from its child care policy – somehow suggesting that young children's real learning will only occur during the hours they attend a school-based program.

The first challenge then is to truly integrate early learning and care.

For five year olds, a full school day Kindergarten that is fully integrated with extended hours for children of working families may meet their needs and reduce some of the problems families now experience finding care that complements a part day K program.

However, meeting the developmental needs of even younger children makes the need to integrate learning and care in seamless programs at one location even more critical. It is hard to imagine that government would consider transporting 3 year olds from one setting to another twice a day or would treat the hours before and after school as less important to the health and well being of children.

Truly integrated programs for very young children will require staff with the training and expertise to meet their needs, facilities that welcome and are safe for young children, and a 'day' that includes independent and cooperative indoor and outdoor play; 'curriculum' that responds to children's interests; physical support with meals and personal hygiene as well as time for rest.

If government proceeds with expanded programs for young children that continue to divide care from learning – it will not be meeting children's needs.

2. Meeting Families' Needs

The Consultation Paper has little to say about BC families with 3-5 year olds. And yet, it is unlikely that we will be able to successfully support young children if we don't take into account the needs of their primary caregivers – families.

The second challenge then is to design and implement programs for 3-5 year olds in ways that respond to the real needs of their families.

The majority of BC parents with young children are in the paid labour force. They need access to quality, affordable care for their children beyond traditional school hours and when schools are closed. They do not need a 'patchwork' of programs, and they certainly don't need or want lower quality care for part of the day or year.

Families also need access to quality, affordable care and learning opportunities for their infants, their toddlers and their school-aged children.

If government proceeds with plans that only address the traditional school day and calendar – they will not be meeting families' needs.

3. Meeting Communities' Needs

The Consultation Paper is silent on the needs of communities. But, communities and employers across the province identify the lack of access to quality, affordable child care as a key challenge to attracting young families and filling labour shortages.

Building on existing community assets by using vacant school space for early childhood programs makes sense. But, schools in neighbourhoods with many children are full. Relying solely on schools space for expanded programs for 3-5 year olds will not provide universal or equitable access in our communities.

Existing child care spaces are an important community asset. They provide integrated care and learning for children, and meet the needs of working families. The problem is they are not supported by sound public policy that ensures universal access nor do they receive their fair share of public funds.

The third challenge then is to design and implement programs for 3-5 year olds in ways that build on the strengths of BC's current child care services.

A narrow focus on expanded school-based 'early learning' programs for 3-5 year olds could further destabilize existing community-based child care programs. And, the quality of these programs will be eroded if government thinks that reducing Community Care Facilities Licensing's current minimum child care regulations is part of the answer.

If government proceeds with plans that ignore or further isolate existing child care services – they will not be using limited community resources effectively or enhancing existing services that have been designed to meet community needs.

Conclusion

If BC's new Early Childhood Learning Agency designs and implements expanded programs for 3-5 year olds in a way that is based on the evidence and responds to the lived experience of BC children, families and communities – progress can be achieved.

This requires careful attention to the current context and an openness to integrating early learning and care in order to meet the needs of all.

We share the concern expressed by many that the short time line for this consultation meets political rather than community needs. A three week, summer feedback window does not meet any reasonable test of meaningful community input.

We understand there will be a second round of consultation on 'options' in the fall. We are more than willing to work with the Early Childhood Learning Agency as they develop their options. And, we fully expect that the community will have adequate time to share their views on the implications of these options for children, families and communities.

The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum remains committed to a high quality comprehensive system that:

- entitles all children access to quality child care and early childhood programs
- provides families with choices from a range of coordinated, quality, licensed and regulated child care programs
- is publicly funded through the tax system and affordable for all families who need or want to use it
- provides caregivers with wages, benefits and working conditions that reflects their education, experience and responsibilities.

Our support for expanded programs for 3-5 year olds will depend on whether BC moves us towards this vision.

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Canadian families do NOT have more child care choice

In the current federal election, the Conservative party says they are “giving parents choice in childcare ... and investing in new child care spaces.” Since coming to power in 2006, they report that they have provided:

- Parents with “\$1,200 per year in direct support for every child under six ... to help parents with the cost of child care”.
- Provinces and territories with their share of “\$250 million per year to assist ... in creating new child care spaces”.¹

To set the record straight:

- The Conservative government cancelled its agreement with BC to transfer \$600 million in dedicated child care funds. They replaced it with a taxable allowance of \$100 per month to parents and a ‘no-strings-attached’ small transfer to provinces.
- \$100 a month does not come close to covering child care fees, which are as high as \$1,230 monthly² in some BC communities.
- BC passed the federal cuts onto child care programs saying that parents should use their taxable allowance from the federal government to pay higher fees.
- BC child care fees went up² and families using child care were no better off.
- The taxable allowance did nothing for families who couldn’t find child care.
- BC’s share of the \$250 million for new spaces is \$33 million. There is no agreement that requires BC to use these funds for new child care spaces.
- BC has publicly announced only \$12.5 million of the federal funds for major child care capital grants, promising to create an additional 2200 licensed spaces by 2010.
- For these spaces to become a reality, communities still have to raise up to 25% of the capital costs and find early childhood educators to hire.
- BC does not track lost spaces but a 2005 study reports that up to 9 out of 10 BC licensed family and group programs closed within 4 years of opening.³
- Even if there is a net growth of 2200 spaces, by 2010 BC will still only have a regulated child care spaces for only about 15% of children under 12.
- **BC families need the next federal government to provide stable, adequate funds that are tied to creating more spaces, lowering parent fees and increasing wages so communities can hire and keep good staff.**

¹ Retrieved from <http://www.conservative.ca/EN/4739/78180>

² Westcoast Family Information and Referral Fees Survey, Vancouver Licensed Group Child Care Monthly Full-time Rates, December 2007 and December 2006

³ Retrieved from <http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/documents/Hidden%20Fragility%20paper%202004-08-041%20Kershaw%20et%20al.pdf>

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September 26, 2008

Dear friends,

On October 14, Canadians will once again go to the polls to elect a federal government. We know we've said it before – but for our community this election is more important than ever. It will determine the kind of Canada our children inherit.

In the 2006 federal election, the Advocacy Forum and our allies across BC predicted that Stephen Harper's so-called 'child care' plan wouldn't work. We said that canceling the federal commitment to transfer over \$600 million to BC that HAD to be spent on child care and replacing it with a taxable allowance of \$100 a month to parents would not solve the child care crisis. And, regrettably, we now know just how right we were.

Just as soon as Harper terminated the child care agreement with BC, things here went from bad to worse. The BC government passed the cuts onto parents, caregivers and communities – saying that parents could use their \$100 allowance to make up the difference. Families, caregivers and communities know the results – waitlists grew, fees went up and wages went down.

Next May British Columbians will have a chance to tell the provincial government what they think about their child care record. But now – it's time to tell all the federal candidates in your riding that Harper's policies have failed and that Canada STILL needs child care.

Let's remember that when families, caregivers, municipalities, unions and others spoke out with one voice against child care cuts, we were strong. Let's remember that when we stood together against multinational corporations trying to buy up our child care services, we kept them out. In this election, let's make sure that every candidate in every BC riding knows that we are a force to be reckoned with.

The links below offer a variety of election tools to help you get the child care message out. We encourage you to take a close look at the federal party platforms. When you do, you will see that the Conservatives are running on their record of offering families child care choice through the \$100 monthly taxable allowance. The other federal parties are offering different approaches to building a universal child care system. We hope you will vote for the candidate you trust to get the job done.

Please use and share these materials widely and stay tuned to this site for more.

Most importantly – on October 14 make sure everyone you know VOTES CHILD CARE.

Links

Federal Parties – child care platforms

- Conservative: www.conservative.ca/EN/4739/78180
- Green: www.greenparty.ca/en/policy/visiongreen/partfour
- Liberal: www.liberal.ca/story_14645_e.aspx
- NDP: www.ndp.ca/page/6750

Elections Canada – www.elections.ca

Code Blue for Child Care – www.buildchildcare.ca

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC – www.cccabc.bc.ca

Child Care Resource and Research Unit – www.childcarecanada.org

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada – www.ccaac.ca

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BC Child Care Advocacy Forum
Submission to the Select Standing Committee
on Finances and Government Services
October 2008

Investing in Child Care is the BEST Choice

Introduction

The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum welcomes the opportunity to appear before this committee again this year to make the case that the **best choice** BC can make in the 2009 budget is to invest in a universally accessible, high quality, publicly funded system of early childhood care and learning.

The Advocacy Forum is an alliance of six provincial child care organizations that have worked together since 1999 to advance a Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care in BC. Together, we represent thousands of front-line providers and employers from all types of child care, families and concerned citizens. As a result our positions reflect the highest level of consensus that exists within BC's child care community today.

The evidence and the lived experience of BC children, families, caregivers and communities support this high level of consensus on 4 key points:

1. Current policy approaches to child care have failed.
2. As a result, child care in BC is in crisis.
3. There are solutions.
4. Others do it – we can too.

Current Approaches have Failed

Since 2001, BC cut \$40 million from its own child care budget. These cuts were being restored with federal transfer funds, which, under the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, were designated for child care and couldn't be spent on other things.

As we all know, in 2006, the federal government cancelled this agreement replacing it with a taxable allowance of \$100 a month to families for every child under 6. They also transferred some funds to BC that they hoped BC would use to build child care spaces.

BC was the only province to pass the federal cuts onto families and caregivers arguing that parents could now use their federal benefit to pay higher child care fees.

BC then spent close to \$100 million in remaining federal funds in a flurry of one-time-only un-tendered expenditures that did not build a system.

Since then, BC has continued to limit its involvement to a subsidy program for low income parents, small operating grants to providers and partial capital grants for minimal space creation – without a public, accountable vision of where they are headed, all without a plan, without timelines and without targets.

Instead, the provincial 'action' has shifted to the Ministry of Education which is exploring 'early learning' programs for 3, 4 and 5 year olds, regrettably with little if any reference to the 'care' that young children and working families need.

BC Child Care is in Crisis

It is no surprise that child care in BC is in crisis. In fact, we expect that based on what you hear from your own constituents – you know that we are not crying wolf.

On 3 key measures – child care in BC is moving backwards.

1. **Parent fees are up.** From 2001 to 2006, average annual child care fees for pre-school aged children in BC went up by \$672. For school-aged care, the increase was more than \$800. In the City of Vancouver, child care fees often top \$1000 per month for infants and toddlers.
2. **Wait lists are long and growing.** BC only has regulated spaces for around 15% of the children in our province and waiting lists, especially for infants and toddlers, can be years long. Recent media reports also highlight the shortage of before and after school spaces. The 2,200 promised new spaces that federal transfer payments are helping to fund won't close the gap – especially given that without adequate support existing spaces continue to close.
3. **Wages remain at poverty levels.** In 2006, the median gross hourly wage for BC's college-trained caregivers in group child care centres was only \$12.58. For many caregivers, wages have in fact gone down. Early Childhood Educators are leaving the field for jobs where they can earn enough to raise their own families, making it even more difficult for communities to provide quality care.

Children, families and child care providers are paying the price of failed policies. Their sacrifices are part of the hidden cost of BC's current economic strength.

There Are Solutions

The good news is that there are solutions. The child care crisis can be solved if BC makes a commitment to:

1. **Build a child care system based on sound policies.** The current examination of expanded early learning programs for young children indicates that BC may now recognize that the founding principles of our public education system – legislated entitlement, universality, and public funding – are equally important to sound public policy for younger children.
2. **Enshrine universal entitlement for young children.** Just as every child has the right to attend school, it's time to ensure that every child also has the right to access a high quality, regulated, child care space if their family wants or need it.
3. **End the false divide between early learning and care.** BC currently separates its policy, planning and funding of 'early learning' programs from its approach to child care. This does not meet the developmental needs of young children or the needs of BC working families. It's time to end the divide and build a truly integrated system of early learning and care.
4. **Provide adequate, sustained public funding.** In a publicly funded child care system, parent fees could be a fraction of what they are now, and child care workers could earn a living wage.

Others do it – we can too.

Canada's shameful record on child care record has been well documented. The OECD reports that Canada still spends less on early childhood education and care services than 13 other developed countries. And, Canadian children still have less access to early childhood education and care services than those in 19 other countries.

These jurisdictions recognize that investing in young children is sound economic and social policy. They recognize that investing in child care:

- Promotes healthy child development.
- Reduces the cost of education, health, criminal justice, social services and income assistance costs down the road.
- Supports labour force attachment and productivity.
- Builds strong, inclusive communities.

We agree with BC's Budget 2009 Consultation Paper that it is about choices.

Here are ours:

1. BC can maintain a strong economy by investing in quality, affordable child care. Given the current economic uncertainty, some will likely say that we can't afford child care. But, BC still has the fiscal capacity to build the child care system we need. Now more than ever, continued economic strength depends on a substantial investment in child care.
2. BC can better support communities by investing in quality, affordable child care services. This creates local jobs, generates local spending, makes it possible for communities to attract and keep young families and builds social cohesion.
3. Our choice for shaping BC's future is to put the needs of young children at the top of the agenda and ensure that they get the best possible start by investing in quality child care programs.

BC has the strength and capacity to get the job done. Now – let's get on with it.

**PARTICIPATING
ORGANIZATIONS**

BC Association of
Child Care Employers

Coalition of Child Care
Advocates of BC

Early Childhood
Educators of BC

School Age Child Care
Association of BC

Westcoast Child Care
Resource Centre

Western Canada Family
Child Care Association of BC

Financial and in-kind support is
provided by Vancouver Foundation,
Vancity Community Foundation
and the member organizations
of the Advocacy Forum.

Child Care and the Economic Crisis

In response to the global economic crisis, governments at all levels are looking to invest in public infrastructure as a way to stimulate the economy.

However, child care is not yet considered part of these economic stimulus packages. For example, the BC Ministry of Education recently acknowledged that building a new system of early care and learning is a big undertaking. They indicated that, due to uncertain economic times and declining provincial revenue projections, the introduction of All Day Kindergarten may be delayed.

To set the record straight:

- It is no surprise that extending universal, publicly funded services to young children is a big undertaking – particularly given the current low level of Canada's investment in young children relative to other countries.¹
- Despite 4 years of large provincial surpluses² that could have been invested in building a quality child care and early learning system, and despite the documented lack of access to those services, BC chose other priorities.
- Now, governments across the world, recognize that they have a key role to play in stimulating the economy through investments in public infrastructure.
- Like other public spending, **investment in early care and learning services will stimulate the local economy** by creating jobs traditionally done by men (construction) and by women (early childhood education) and by reducing families' child care costs so that they have funds to meet other pressing needs.
- Investing in young children has significant **additional benefits** compared to other public spending including healthy childhood development, family support, mothers' labour force attachment, poverty reduction, and social inclusion.
- During difficult times, the need to support families so they can work or go to school and to collectively ameliorate the developmental impact of reduced family income and increased stress on young children is more important than ever.

BC still needs universal, publicly funded services that meet the developmental needs of children and working families and build on community strengths.

Public investment in quality child care and learning services is the best infrastructure investment BC could make.

¹ Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) (2006). *Early learning and childcare: How does Canada measure up?* Child Care Briefing Notes.

² http://www.fin.gc.ca/frt/2008/frt08_5e.html#26



we need child care to be
available
in our
community

There are only enough regulated child care spaces for around 15% of the children in our province. Waiting lists for child care spaces can be years long.

But there is a solution – we can meet the diverse needs of children and families in our communities. How? With a publicly funded, coordinated child care system.

To find out more, go to www.advocacyforum.bc.ca.

child care
advocacy forum
Smart solutions for BC families

Smart Solutions for BC Families » Availability

There are over half a million children under the age of 12 in our province, but there are only regulated spaces in group and family child care for around 15% of them. Waiting lists for child care spaces can be years long — even parents who put their name on a waiting list before their child is born can be without child care when their parental leave ends and they go back to work. For parents who work shifts or live in rural communities, finding quality child care for their children is even harder.

This isn't just an issue in BC — lack of availability is a problem families face across Canada. Of 20 comparable countries, Canada's pre-school aged children have the lowest rate of access to early learning and child care. In countries like Belgium, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, nearly 100% of pre-school aged children have access to care.

Why is Canada so far behind? In countries where child care is widely available, governments have invested public funds to build services in communities — something that hasn't happened here.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Every child in BC has the right to attend public school. Now it's time to make sure that every child also has the right to access a high quality, regulated child care space if their family wants or needs it. BC has the financial ability to build a child care system that works for children, families and communities.



we need child care to be affordable

Child care costs more than post-secondary education – for some families, more than a monthly mortgage payment. That’s because parents pay about 80% of the cost.

And yet child care workers’ wages often fall below the poverty line.

But there is a solution – we can meet the diverse needs of children and families in our communities. How? With a publicly funded, coordinated child care system.

To find out more, go to www.advocacyforum.bc.ca.

child care
advocacy forum

Smart solutions for BC families

Smart Solutions for BC Families » Affordability

Child care costs more than post-secondary education — for some families, more than a monthly mortgage payment. That's because parents pay about 80% of the cost — a far greater percentage than in other countries. And yet child care workers' wages often fall below the poverty line.

From 2001 to 2006, average annual child care fees for pre-school aged children in BC went up by \$672. For school-aged care, the increase was more than \$800. In the City of Vancouver, child care fees often top \$1000 per month for infants and toddlers.*

But it doesn't have to be this way. With a publicly funded child care system, parent fees could be a fraction of what they are now, and child care workers could earn a living wage. Libraries, schools and roads are built and maintained with public funds through the tax system, because we know that everyone should have access to these services. And the people who work in our libraries, schools, and on our roads are paid a living wage. Why should child care be any different?

BC has the ability to build a child care system that works for children, families and communities.

** Provincial fee increases: see ECEC in Canada, 2001 and 2006.
Vancouver fees: see 2007 fee surveys.*

we need child care to work



Our economy depends on working parents, and working parents depend on child care. But a shortage of quality, affordable child care spaces makes it almost impossible to balance family and work responsibilities.

There is a solution – we can meet the needs of working parents and their children in our communities. How? With a publicly funded, coordinated child care system.

To find out more, go to www.advocacyforum.bc.ca.

child care
advocacy forum
Smart solutions for BC families

Smart Solutions for BC Families » The Economy

Our economy depends on working parents, and working parents depend on child care. 73% of women with children at home are part of the Canadian workforce.¹ They are our teachers, our nurses and doctors, our postal workers and librarians, our engineers and tradespeople, our cleaners, our child care providers.

More than 77% of parents return to work following a child's birth.² But with regulated spaces for only 15% of the children in BC, going back to work isn't easy. In a 2006 survey, nearly half of parents said that balancing job and family responsibilities was the main source of stress when they returned to work.³ Parents have few options – many work part-time, split shifts, and patch together care for their children.

Demand for child care is also increasing among employers who struggle to fill jobs that are vacant due to the increasing competition for skilled labour.⁴

But it doesn't have to be this way. Every family who wants or needs it should have access to a high quality, affordable child care space. There is no better time to invest in a publicly funded child care system that will provide a return on many levels – to children who benefit from high quality care, to caregivers employed in our communities, to parents who can participate in the labour force. What bank offers that kind of return on investment?

BC has the ability to build a child care system that works for children, families and communities.

1 Women in Canada: Work Chapter Updates. Statistics Canada, 2006.

2 General Social Survey: Navigating family transitions. Statistics Canada, June 2007.

3 General Social Survey: Navigating family transitions. Statistics Canada, June 2007.

4 Report from the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Government of Canada's Child Care Spaces Initiative. Human Resource and Social Development Canada, 2007.

SMART SOLUTIONS FOR BC FAMILIES :: JOIN THE CONVERSATION

The following are excerpts from comments posted at www.advocacyforum.bc.ca

Tell us about your experiences

We asked:

- How long have you waited? Tell us about your experience trying to access a quality space for your child.
- If you are a parent, tell us whether fees for quality child care are affordable for you.
- If you work in child care, tell us what it would take for you to make a living wage.

POSTED ON 07 SEP 2009 BY KERRY

I am a 22 year old mother who had a steady paying job but recently had to resign on August 31st 2009 due to not being able to find child care in my community. ...

I am scared, worried and without a huge part of my family's income. Even after all the expenses in child care I would at least bring home 800.00 which to some is not much but now it is ZERO! I am a positive thinker therefore I have already set new goals for my family but even if I did want pursue those how would I with no child care and really no means to pay for it? How will I better this family?

NO Child Care = NO Job

POSTED ON 17 JUN 2009 BY CHRISTINA

We live in Vancouver, and put our child on the wait list for the day care near our home about 2 weeks after we found out we were pregnant. Two years and six months later, we got him a spot at a toddler center (he was 22 months old when he got in). We knew before we got pregnant that the wait list was around 2 years long, so we had to think long and hard about whether or not we could afford some alternative for 2 years before we even decided to have a child. The wait list is currently 1500 families for the facility we got into. That is after it opened 100 new spots just this year. The wait list is still that long. I wonder what could even potentially solve that seemingly insane wait.

I have to admit that the cost of child care, whether in our own home, in someone else's home, or in a group setting, has serious impacts on our decision whether to have a child in the first place, and then has had an even greater impact on our decision not to have more than one. Living in Vancouver, our mortgage is already ridiculously high, and doubling our childcare costs on top of this is simply not realistic, even with both of us working.

The \$100 per month that we get for child care, supposedly offering us a "choice," is a shameful attempt at a political statement that does not actually accomplish much for families. ... it's taxable, and even if it were a full \$100 per month, what can that get you? A few nights of baby sitting, realistically. The "choice" that this provides us is very little choice at all; the only choice we have is to pay out of pocket large fees for private care that we had to wait years to get into. Ultimately it contributed to our choice to have only one child. It did not allow one of us to choose to stay at home; ... we would not have been able to stay in Vancouver if we were to have taken this route, due to the high housing costs.

POSTED ON 11 MAY 2009 BY CAROLE

How little society values our most precious resources... I remember being a single parent in the late 60's... no child support... living in a small town and working in the pink ghetto sector (secretary)... moved to edmonton with my 4 year old son and received subsidized child care... I thought I had died and gone to heaven. What a difference that made to both of us... trips to the dentist, community outings and participation! Yes we do need a national child care policy.

POSTED ON 08 MAY 2009 BY DIANE

When I was pregnant and started looking for childcare I wasn't in total shock at how hard it was. I had heard all the rumours of how hard it would be to find childcare and to start looking early. With the expenses of putting your child on wait lists (often \$25 and up per location) and then the total lack of spots my husband and I started getting worried the closer and closer my return to work came.

We did not have any choices in where we wanted to send our son. With trying to find something on a reasonable commute route we were only ever offered two spots. The first I did not feel totally comfortable with and the daycare worker would be out of town for 6 weeks or so that we would have been high and dry for daycare anyways. The second position was alright, but not in a very convenient location for my husband. The stress of taking my son to daycare has been hard on our whole family.

When I read that we ranked 25th out of 25 developed countries with regards to our childcare I again was not totally surprised but was sad for the state of our child care. For being such a proud Canadian I am now a disappointed and stressed mother that wishes our child care options could be less expensive, standardized and more readily available.

POSTED ON 08 MAY 2009 BY J. EDWARDS

I am the Mother of 3 wonderful boys. The oldest are 4 year old twins. Until last year I was not able to place them in daycare. There were no spaces for toddlers. My Husband and I both had well paying union positions, however I was only able to work when he was at home during the evenings and on weekends. This option is not conducive to the family environment people hope for. Leaving us to do things as single parental units.

Last year when the boys turned 3 we were able to place them in a local daycare. It is a great facility. It is very busy and has also just opened up an infant section. However the ladies who work there are not paid enough to look after our children.

The infant section may prove to be useful to us this year as we welcomed another baby boy to our family this past September. However they may not have space for us, as of right now we are on the waiting list.

I have spoken with subsidy. They said they would cover the 2 hours a day of a licensed preschool that is offered at this daycare. But I still have two boys that would require another 6 hours a day. ... so we would still be paying for full days which are \$32.00 a day for each older boy. That's \$64.00 a day. The infant is \$50.00 a day! This is actually inexpensive compared to some of the prices in bigger centres. ... That's \$570.00 a week or \$2280.00 a month, WHAT! This is 3X our monthly mortgage payment. Our mortgage payment is quite low compared to some and we moved to a rural town where housing prices were half of what they were in the bigger centres.

I don't know what to do? How is one family supposed to be able to afford this?

POSTED ON 29 JAN 2009 BY JENNIFER

I am a single mom of 2.5 year old twins. I am out of pocket \$624 per month for daycare. I get the minimum amount of subsidy. My twins and I are really struggling right now. I have a good job with good pay but somehow we still have no money left and are constantly struggling just to buy groceries! Daycare costs are slowly pushing us closer to poverty.

POSTED ON 26 JAN 2009 BY RACHAEL

I was just reassessed for childcare subsidy and found out I no longer qualify. I have 9 year old twins and my costs have suddenly gone up almost \$400/month! I am a single mother with a very good job, but I live in Vancouver and pay ridiculous rent. I moved here to be closer to medical care as one of my sons is disabled. Now not only do I have to pay more for childcare, I have to make a decision about medical equipment I can afford...should I get his leg brace or his hearing aids first? No child in his condition should have to go without, but I am now put in this place. Difficult choices to make thanks to a backwards program and underfunded spaces.

POSTED ON 22 JAN 2009 BY JOANNA

I want to return to work part-time. I was informed by one of the few quality centres where I live that my son could not attend daycare part-time until he was two years old. There is pressure for women to work, and to produce children, but no support. I should not have to worry about putting my child with an untrained, undocumented childcare provider because quality care is not available.

POSTED ON 10 SEP 2008 BY ERIN

Recently I was told after my son started first grade that I no longer qualified for a daycare subsidy. My income was the same level as when he was in kindergarden but they told me that because my son had turned six that the formulas changed. To have my son in before and after school care I am charged 320.00 per month.

Is take home pay of 1860.00 per month too much to get assistance? I am told it is by the provincial government. ... The law says he cannot stay at home by himself (not that I would do that anyway!!) and the government has also legislated that a child over six somehow isn't as important as one who is three? Does this make any sense?

POSTED ON 25 JUN 2008 BY KAREN

A family is diverse and encompasses many different situations and circumstances and does not fit one stereotype, but our subsidy calculations and program are ridged in their expectations and outcomes. Frustrating and defeating to many many families.

The cost of care for parents and wages earned are insufficient thus a formula for disaster impacting the family unit.

Wages for child care staff are inadequate with little or no benefits being paid by employer. This profession is mentally, physically, emotionally encompassing with health and safety risks most can not comprehend. The lack of reasonable and adequate wages/benefits is the major reason for shortage of staff.

If we believe in the children of this country and the impact of early years being so significant then why why why haven't things changed to meet the demands of child care? Is it because those making these decisions really don't care? Is it they don't understand? Is it they can't see the importance? Is it because of the all mighty dollar? What is holding the government back from making the right decision for children and families in Canada a priority?

POSTED ON 16 JUN 2008 BY JAMEY

I was shocked to learn that it was advised I put my name on a waitlist for daycare before my child was even born! Now that I'm getting ready to return to work, I'm finding that there aren't nearly as many daycare spots available for infants as there should be. I understand that the ratio is (and should be) 4:1, but can't believe the costs I'm being quoted - I live in the Tri-Cities, and FT daycare for infants averages at \$950 to \$1000 a month!!!! I've yet to find a single daycare that has all the qualities I'm looking for that isn't in the opposite direction of where I have to go to work. ... One daycare I'm on a waitlist for won't be able to tell me whether I've got a spot until closer to my return to work date. They told me that I should DEFINITELY be on several waitlists. The situation is causing a lot of stress for sure.

POSTED ON 16 JUN 2008 BY STEPHANIE

I was able to use out of school care provided by a community association in a building on school property until they lost their subsidy and was forced to charge more than \$20 a day for after school care. I felt forced to change schools in order for my child to be able to walk to my work after school where for free she can sit in an empty office all by herself for two hours each day rather than get to spend quality time playing and getting help with her homework from qualified staff.

I am sad that I cannot afford \$400 a month for childcare, but angry for my child as she is being ripped off! Children need open spaces, appropriate activities and safe care options and as a parent I should be able to find affordable care in our local area.

Let's take a lesson from Quebec and provide affordable child care for all families! Our children deserve the best!

POSTED ON 15 JUN 2008 BY JEANNETTE

I am a single mother of a 6 year old boy. For almost 4 years I was getting help from the government to pay for my child's daycare. Now they won't help me they say I make too much money. HOW DOES A SINGLE MOTHER MAKE TOO MUCH MONEY? Especially in this day and age. I pay more for daycare than I do for rent. I happen to work in the childcare industry as an Early Childhood Educator and I have been for 5 years. I left one centre for another because of better pay and since I've done that I now make too much. I am struggling more now than ever.

I'm angry and frustrated that everyone talks about lowering childcare fees and getting a better system but still nothings being done about it. I say enough talking and start taking action. Also as an Early Childhood Educator I do feel strongly that we are underpaid for what we do.

Tell us what YOU need child care to be

We know families need child care to be affordable and available in their communities. We've outlined the current lack of affordability and availability, and how it could change.

We asked:

- what other elements of a child care system are important to you and your family?

POSTED ON 01 JAN 2009 BY AMED

Childcare needs to be affordable. Many parents don't receive any subsidy because they "make too much money". This is really a joke. Paying anywhere from \$700 - \$1000 per child/month for care is not reasonable. How are parents expected to support children, pay mortgages and all other living expenses when they're faced with huge monthly daycare bills? Parents who are "doing OK" are completely unable to get ahead, unable to save money for their children's education & their own retirement because they are burdened with huge monthly expenses every time they turn around. And daycare providers do not make enough money for what they do. These people are helping to raise our children and yet they make barely enough to put them above the poverty line. It is truly a disgrace that this is happening in Canada.

POSTED ON 25 JUN 2008 BY KAREN

I have been in the Early Childhood field for the past 25 years. The experience as a parent and as an Educator has been a blessing and aggravating to say the least.

I believe and place great value working with children and families for a host of reasons. The first is supporting children and their families. If families are successful and supported then we have productive children and supporting individuals who are contributing to society.

As a manager of a licensed facility I see and deal day after day with the frustration of parents who can not obtain subsidy because of the rigid expectations or that are made wait for approval which impacts their space in a centre. Long wait list that force parents into taking space where they can find spaces, which can translate into a safety issue. Child care rates that are rising to meet operating a child care centre and these increases do not offset the cost of maintaining high quality staff. Increase cost of maintenance and services needed to ensure licensing standards.

I believe the solutions have been clearly outlined in the Smart Solutions for BC Families website. Let's not reinvent the wheel is it possible for someone in government to take this situation seriously and make the changes so needed.

POSTED ON 08 MAY 2008 BY LEIGHANN

I am an Early Childhood Educator who has been working in the field for the past 16 years. I am very dedicated to providing the best quality, reliable and affordable childcare programming for the children in my community. I am continually frustrated when I am turning children away because we do not have space in our programs or because we do not have qualified staff to open the spaces we do have. I am frustrated that as a non profit daycare my staff are paid far below what they are worth (some have not had a raise in the past 10 years). And I am frustrated that as a care provider I have to raise fees for services that some times are out of reach for many parents (often these are the parents that do not qualify for child care subsidy) and increased fees put an additional strain on the whole family.

I would like to see a system that treats early childhood education as an important resource and service and allows all families equal access to services such as preschools and daycare regardless of financial standing. I would like to see a system that provides on going funding for basic resources and equipment. I would like to see a system that values and respects our level of training and commitment to children. I would like to see a system that provides a fair working wage to child care providers. I would like to see a system were the decision makers really listen to the worker on the front lines and really hear what is important to us, children and families, so they stop throwing away money on surveys, one time initiatives and "new" services that have no impact and start focusing on the existing programs.

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Celebrating a Decade of Advocacy... and moving on

May 2010

At the end of 2009, the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum honoured and celebrated a decade of working together to advance a progressive child care vision and agenda.

A lot has changed since 1999. Until then, BC's leading child care organizations worked independently from each other. At that time, the community social services sector was just beginning to define itself as an important economic and social player – and child care was at the table. At the same time, we faced an historic strike with the potential to set a new benchmark for child care wages and benefits.

Many of us realized that to make progress, we needed a collective voice for child care. So, six provincial child care organizations met to explore how we could work together. In short order, the group crafted *A Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care Services in BC* and the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum was born.

While each organization recognized the importance of working on our own priorities, we all agreed that without a common vision for child care, few of our long-term goals were achievable. We accepted a shared responsibility for advancing our common beliefs.

We agreed then – as we do today – that BC and Canada need a publicly funded child care system that entitles **all** children access to quality child care. We agreed this system must honour and respect diversity; must provide families with real choices; and must provide caregivers with wages, benefits and working conditions they deserve.

Over the past ten years, we have accomplished much to be proud of. Together, we:

- Provided consistent and clear public information about public policies and budgets – highlighting their impact on children, families and communities.
- Supported advocacy across BC through outreach, workshops, public speaking and networking.
- Organized postcard, letter writing and petition campaigns.
- Built partnerships with the broader early childhood development community.
- Educated the public, policy makers, and community leaders about child care through an accessible and effective website, public presentations and workshops.
- Met with decision makers to inform and influence their child care policies.

And, most importantly, in the face of budget cuts, fragmentation and setbacks, we stuck together. It is a decade of work well worthy of respect, honouring and celebration!

2009 was our final year of funding from the Vancouver Foundation. We would like to bring closure to our work, celebrate an important era in BC child care advocacy and put our on-going commitment to advocacy to work where it can continue to make a difference.

We believe that First Call's Early Childhood Development (ECD) Roundtable best reflects the spirit and vision of the Advocacy Forum. We agree it makes most sense for the Forum's member organizations to devote whatever time and resources they can to the Roundtable and to ensure that child care remains a priority at that table. And, we have contributed the Forum's remaining resources to support First Call and the ECD Roundtable to carry on the work.

We thank everyone for your support and promise that we will keep at it until BC has the child care system our children, families and communities need and deserve!

