

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)