

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

99-11-01

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