

child care
advocacy forum

1999 – 2010

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.