

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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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

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Child Care Advocacy Forum Reaffirms Common Vision and Agenda

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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 After the plan for publicly funded child care was repealed last summer, government's intentions were not clear.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?