

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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Participating Organizations

BC Association of
Child Care Employers

Coalition of Child Care
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Early Childhood
Educators of BC

School Age Child Care
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Westcoast Child Care
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Western Canada
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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