

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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BC Association of Child
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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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School Closures Threaten Child Care

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The Child Care Advocacy Forum is increasingly concerned about the serious impact that school closures and changes to school calendars are having on child care programs located in and on school grounds. While school-aged child care is likely to be hit the hardest, many other programs will be affected.

Here's what we are hearing:

- Schools in a number of school districts will be closed this coming fall and child care programs in these schools will lose their space. In Prince George, all school-based child care programs have received eviction notices. If space is available this fall, rents will increase from \$300 to \$1000 a month.
- Some school districts might close schools completely during winter, spring and summer breaks. Child care programs will have to pay the full cost of keeping the schools open during these periods. But, most child care programs cannot afford these extra costs and will have to close at the very time when access to child care is vitally important to working families.
- Some school districts are considering changes to the school calendar to reduce the total number of days that schools are in operation. Many more families will need care for school- aged children for days when schools are closed but the cost of keeping child care open will be borne by the child care programs and the families they serve.

Locating child care programs in and on school grounds makes good sense!

The reasons are obvious:

- schools already exist in every neighbourhood and are publicly funded to serve children
- school-based services increase access for families with children of different ages
- school-based programs create a seamless day for school-aged children
- school-based programs support closer cooperation between families, child care providers and schools

The 1991 Report "Showing We Care: A Child Care Strategy for the 90's" recommended that the development of on-site child care in school settings should be a priority. But, here we are in 2002 and the situation is getting worse.

While we appreciate that school districts are facing financial pressures, children, families and child care services cannot be asked to pay the price.

This is yet one more example of how decisions being made across provincial ministries are destabilizing the already fragile child care system.

Help protect school-based child care programs!

Here's what you can do...

- Contact Premier Campbell at premier@gov.bc.ca and the Minister of Education, Christy Clark at christy.clark.mla@leg.bc.ca and urge them to give school boards the mandate and resources they need to cover the occupancy costs of child care programs in their facilities.
- Contact Lynn Stephens, the Minister of State for Women's Equality at lynn.stephens.mla@leg.bc.ca and call on her to take the lead in ensuring cross-ministerial cooperation on child care.
- Write, phone or visit your School Trustees to make sure they understand the impact of their decisions on child care. For School Board and District Contact info go to www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools/sdinfo

Remember, school board elections are this coming November. Make sure trustees know that your vote will depend on their support for child care.

- Contact your local District Parents Advisory Council (DPAC) to urge them to speak out loudly and clearly for the child care programs in their district. Better yet, if you have children in school, get involved in your school and district PACs.
- Contact your local Teachers' Association at www.bctf.ca/About/pres.html to urge them to include information about the impact of school closures on child care in their public education materials.