

2772 East Broadway
Vancouver BC V5M 1Y8
PHONE 604 515 6257
TOLL FREE 1 877 361 1116
FAX 604 709 5662
www.advocacyforum.bc.ca

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

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Westcoast Child Care
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SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT #5 :: September 2008

Canadian families do NOT have more child care choice

In the current federal election, the Conservative party says they are “giving parents choice in childcare ... and investing in new child care spaces.” Since coming to power in 2006, they report that they have provided:

- Parents with “\$1,200 per year in direct support for every child under six ... to help parents with the cost of child care”.
- Provinces and territories with their share of “\$250 million per year to assist ... in creating new child care spaces”.¹

To set the record straight:

- The Conservative government cancelled its agreement with BC to transfer \$600 million in dedicated child care funds. They replaced it with a taxable allowance of \$100 per month to parents and a ‘no-strings-attached’ small transfer to provinces.
- \$100 a month does not come close to covering child care fees, which are as high as \$1,230 monthly² in some BC communities.
- BC passed the federal cuts onto child care programs saying that parents should use their taxable allowance from the federal government to pay higher fees.
- BC child care fees went up² and families using child care were no better off.
- The taxable allowance did nothing for families who couldn’t find child care.
- BC’s share of the \$250 million for new spaces is \$33 million. There is no agreement that requires BC to use these funds for new child care spaces.
- BC has publicly announced only \$12.5 million of the federal funds for major child care capital grants, promising to create an additional 2200 licensed spaces by 2010.
- For these spaces to become a reality, communities still have to raise up to 25% of the capital costs and find early childhood educators to hire.
- BC does not track lost spaces but a 2005 study reports that up to 9 out of 10 BC licensed family and group programs closed within 4 years of opening.³
- Even if there is a net growth of 2200 spaces, by 2010 BC will still only have a regulated child care spaces for only about 15% of children under 12.
- **BC families need the next federal government to provide stable, adequate funds that are tied to creating more spaces, lowering parent fees and increasing wages so communities can hire and keep good staff.**

¹ Retrieved from <http://www.conservative.ca/EN/4739/78180>

² Westcoast Family Information and Referral Fees Survey, Vancouver Licensed Group Child Care Monthly Full-time Rates, December 2007 and December 2006

³ Retrieved from <http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/documents/Hidden%20Fragility%20paper%202004-08-041%20Kershaw%20et%20al.pdf>