

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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BC Association of
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Coalition of Child Care
Advocates of BC

Early Childhood
Educators of BC

School Age Child Care
Association of BC

Westcoast Child Care
Resource Centre

Western Canada Family
Child Care Association
of BC

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Structural Changes Won't Solve Political Problems

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Recent media reports suggest that provincial responsibility for child care will soon move from the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services (MCAWS) to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). While government has not made an official announcement, senior bureaucrats in Victoria confirm that planning for the move is underway.

To understand what such a move might mean for advancing a quality, publicly funded child care system in BC, we need to look at recent history.

Since 2001, BC's provincial government has separated ministerial responsibility for 'child care' from ministerial responsibility for early childhood development (ECD) and other children's programs. While the Premier proudly points to the Minister of State for Early Childhood as proof of his government's commitment to young children, child care, a cornerstone of any effective early childhood development strategy has been left to languish in MCAWS far away from the ECD planning tables and funding envelope. From the start, it was clear that this approach was misguided.

So, if child care's move from MCAWS to MCFD means that government now understands that the false separation between child care and early childhood development was dysfunctional – we welcome the decision.

But, child care history in BC also teaches us that structural changes alone will not solve the problem. Over the last ten years, child care has been in at least 5 different ministries. When we look at the progress and setbacks over that period, it is clear that the key factor is not child care's organizational home. Rather, the key factor is the political will of the government of the day to build a quality, affordable system that meets the needs of all children and families.

So, if child care's move from MCAWS to MCFD is going to make a real difference, government needs to take meaningful steps to reverse the damage their funding cuts and policy changes have done to child care in BC.

As we have said so many times before – they need to:

- ✓ Restore provincial funding for child care to 2000/01 levels.
- ✓ Use dedicated federal funds for early childhood development and early learning and child care to supplement, rather than replace provincial spending.
- ✓ Develop and implement a five year plan that moves child care from the current user fee system to a publicly funded system.

These are the real solutions to the child care crisis in BC.