

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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BC Association of
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Coalition of Child
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of BC

Early Childhood
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School Age Child
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Westcoast Child
Care Resource
Centre

Western Canada
Family Child Care
Association of BC

Funding and Support provided by:

Status of Women
Canada - BC/Yukon
Region through
Coalition of Child
Care Advocates of
BC

United Way of the
Lower Mainland -
First Years First



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September 2000

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We hope you had a good summer and took some time to relax and celebrate the important progress we achieved last Spring. We now live in one of two jurisdictions in North America where there is a commitment to build a comprehensive, publicly funded child care system! While this is a huge accomplishment, our work is far from over.

This Fall, the Child Care Advocacy Forum is asking you to join us on two important advocacy initiatives:

1. **Sign On For Canada's Kids: Deadline December 2000**

The goal of the cross Canada campaign is to ensure that the federal/provincial/territorial governments reach an agreement on an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Strategy by December 2000. While support for such an agreement is growing, the people of Canada need to let governments know that they must meet this deadline because all children are entitled to the best start in life.

A federal/provincial/territorial agreement will be the mechanism through which the federal government provides funds to the provinces to support a coordinated range of services for all young children including pre and post natal care; early childhood learning and child care; and parenting supports. Our provincial government is taking a very positive position on such an agreement, **and we need to do everything we can to ensure that federal dollars are available to support the implementation of our publicly funded child care system in B.C.**

Attached is a package of materials from the campaign to use in your community, including a **Petition** that is being signed across Canada. There is also a campaign website - **www.signonforcanadaskids.org** - where you can sign the petition, fax a decision-maker, add your organization's endorsement, get up dated information, and more.

We encourage you to make this campaign your advocacy priority. Here's how you can get involved:

- **Collect signatures on the Petition** - sign on-line and download/ copy the petition and send it out through your networks
- **Endorse the campaign** - E-Mail your group's endorsement to info@signonforcanadaskids.org to add your organization to the list
- **Link the campaign website to your website** - go to the website and click "Link to your site" and follow the 3 simple steps
- **Write, fax, E-Mail or visit your provincial and federal representatives** to gain their support and commitment
- **Organize a local event** to spotlight the campaign and collect signatures.

2. Implementation of BC's publicly funded child care system

Government and community reps are working hard on the implementation of the first phase of B.C.'s new child care initiative. Starting in January 2001, parents will pay a maximum of \$7 a day for before-and-after school care in licensed child care centres and those approved centres will receive funding from the provincial government to cover the additional costs of providing care.

Representatives of each of the member organizations of the Child Care Advocacy Forum are participating in Minister Pullinger's Implementation Working Group. Our goal is to support successful implementation of the first phase in a way that reflects our "Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care Services in B.C." Once Phase 1 is up and running, we will turn our attention to the development of a concrete 5 year plan that extends the new initiative to all children and families in B.C.

The Fall will be a busy time, as parents learn about the program and school aged centres complete the application process. We may see renewed public and media interest in the initiative. It will be important for all of us to keep our eyes on the prize by focusing on the benefits of a publicly funded system as we move from political commitment to action.

Here are some of the ways that you can make a difference:

- **Keep up to date** on the details of the new initiative so you can provide accurate information to parents, the community and the media. Information is available on the Ministry's website - www.sdes.gov.bc.ca/programs/childcar.htm or you can call the toll free line at **1-800-663-7867** (365-6501 in Victoria).
- **Let your MLA know that you support the initiative** and that you expect them to take further action towards a comprehensive publicly funded child care system. (This will set the stage for our work on child care in the next provincial election).
- **Speak to community groups and the media** about the benefits of a publicly funded child care system in your community.

So, there's lots to do, but together, we are up to it! Please keep us informed about activities and issues in your community.

One last thing - the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C. is sponsoring an Advocacy Symposium on November 17 and 18. Information is included in this package. We hope that you will make plans to attend so that we can strengthen our growing movement.

Sincerely,

Rita Chudnovsky, Facilitator
Child Care Advocacy Forum