

CHILD CARE ADVOCACY FORUM

B.C.'s New Child Care Initiative An Information Update April, 2000

What do we know about the new Child Care Initiative?

On March 15, 2000 the Provincial Government's Throne Speech included the following commitment:

In this session, my government will begin to build with parents and care providers a publicly-funded child care system. Our first step will be a new initiative to support safe, affordable before- and after-school care.

On March 27, 2000 the Provincial Budget committed, for the 2000/01 fiscal year:

\$14 million for implementation of a before-and-after-school child care program on school sites.

Other than press reports, no additional detailed information has been released.

On March 29, 2000 representatives of the Child Care Advocacy Forum met with Minister Jan Pullinger. We asked the Minister about the government's plans to date. The Minister confirmed a number of items that had been reported in the press. She also made it clear that she intends to work, in a collaborative process, with parents, child care providers and others on further implementation details.

Based on press reports and our discussion with the Minister, it is our understanding that:

- The initiative will begin with school-aged child care spaces for 6 - 12 year olds.
- There are currently 20,000 licensed school-aged child care spaces in B.C. for children aged 6 - 12. Of these, 10,000 are on school sites.
- The initiative will begin with 10,000 spaces on school sites.
- Parents using these spaces will pay \$7 or \$8 a day.
- Low income parents will pay less.
- The initiative will begin on Jan. 1, 2001 and the \$14 million in this year's provincial budget will cover the last quarter of this fiscal year
- (Jan.1 - March 31, 2001)
- Further plans will be developed through a collaborative implementation process.

What is the Child Care Advocacy Forum's Response to the Initiative?

The Child Care Advocacy Forum believes that the commitment in the Throne Speech and the plan to begin a before-and-after school child care program **are significant and important first steps**. They indicate that government listened to the thousands of British Columbians who told them that we need to move towards a publicly funded child care system that entitles all children access to quality, affordable child care.

We believe that these developments should be celebrated and encourage groups and individuals to communicate their support for these developments to government.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum's work will now focus on:

- Active involvement in the implementation of the first step of the Initiative. We will work to support a successful first step that can serve as a model for the further expansion of the child care program and will use our "Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care Services in B.C." as a starting place for our participation in the design and delivery of the first step.
- Development and implementation of a 5 year incremental plan that entitles all children access to publicly funded, quality services. We will continue to advocate for a plan that supports a broad range of programs and services that facilitate the growth and development of all children including full and part time programs for children from birth to 12 years of age; centre, family and in-home care; family resource and support programs and Child Care Resource and Referral programs.
- Advocating for a multi-year financial commitment that provides the resources required to implement the 5 year plan.
- Encouraging and supporting the provincial government in making child care a cornerstone of the National Children's Agenda and negotiating a cost-sharing agreement with the federal government.

We will continue to provide our members and partners with updates on developments as regularly as possible.