

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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CHILD CARE BY THE NUMBERS #1

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Throughout BC:

- **families** struggle to find quality, affordable child care
- **providers** struggle to get by on a less than living wage
- **programs** struggle to find qualified staff and keep the doors open
- **communities** struggle to save federal funds for child care.

Yet, Premier Campbell and Linda Reid, BC's minister of state for child care, say things have never been better – subsidies for families, operating funds to spaces and capital funds for expansion have all been increased.

(See BC Legislature Question Period statements on child care made May 16 at <http://www.leg.bc.ca/hansard/38th2nd/H60516p.htm>)

What explains such completely different pictures of child care in BC?
As usual, an analysis of the dollars provides some answers.

X Minister Reid says BC is spending **\$200 million** this year on child care. (We understand this includes provincial spending on child care programs, administration and Supported Child Development)

\$ If we accept this figure, it's not great news! Here's why:

In 2001 BC spent **\$240 million** on child care and this was **before the province received any federal funds for child care.**

In 2002, BC cut its own child care spending by \$40 million a year, to **\$200 million**. As a result:

- Thousands of BC families lost child care subsidies and had no choice but to remove their children from licensed care.
- Wages were rolled back and many qualified early childhood educators had no choice but to leave the field.
- Operating funds to programs were reduced and some programs had no choice but to raise fees, reduce service or close their doors.

In 2003, BC began to receive federal transfer funds for child care. **BC has used these funds to *replace* provincial cuts by:**

- restoring subsidies for lower income families
- making slight increases in operating funds
- providing capital grants to create new spaces.

So, thanks to federal funds, we are **finally back to the 2001 child care funding level of \$240 million overall.**

But – the federal funds are due to end on March 31, 2007.

Read on to see what Premier Campbell and Minister Reid 'say' about the child care numbers today. In response – read what 'we say' about what's at stake when federal transfer payments end.

When Premier Campbell or Minister Reid say:	We Say:
10,000 more children are eligible for subsidies.	Only after BC cut thousands of children off subsidy 4 years ago. And, even these increases are thanks only to federal funds.
40,000 more child care spaces now receive operating funds.	BC reduced the total amount of dollars going into child care operating funds. These reduced funds were spread more thinly over a larger number of spaces. Recent increases in operating funds were minimal and not tied to affordability or quality. And, even these increases are thanks only to federal funds.
1500 spaces have been created in the last 10 months	This doesn't take into account the instability in child care. For every 10 licensed family and centre-based programs that opened in BC, 9 closed within 4 years. (Kershaw 2005) BC's child care capital grant program does not cover the full capital cost of new spaces. The new spaces – which don't yet exist – only make a small dent in wait lists across BC. The new spaces are not tied to any coherent community or regional child care plans. And, even these spaces are thanks only to federal funds.
They are proud of their \$200 million annual provincial child care budget.	This amount does not include the federal funds that the province has used to reinvest in child care. This amount 'low balls' total spending to reduce expectations that BC will pick up the costs now paid for with federal funds. This is nothing to be proud of. It's still \$40 million less than BC spent on child care when this government took office.

In short — we say:

5 years without a child care plan, no new provincial dollars and no commitment to save or replace the federal child care dollars — IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH!

BC families and communities need to know what BC will do in the face of \$455 million in cuts to federal dedicated child care funds.

Watch for Child Care By The Numbers #2 for our analysis of how federal child care funds that are included in BC's 3 Year Budget could and should be used to build child care.