

# ***Child Care Advocacy Forum***

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## ***Participating Organizations:***

BC Association of Child  
Care Services

Coalition of Child  
Care Advocates of BC

Early Childhood Educators  
of BC

School Age Child  
Care Association

Westcoast Child Care  
Resource Centre

Western Canada Family  
Child Care Association of  
BC

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BC

## **Update from the Child Care Advocacy Forum**

**August 16, 2001**

**Greetings everyone!**

On August 9, 2001, representatives from the Child Care Advocacy Forum met with the Honourable Lynn Stephens, Minister of State for Women's Equality, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services. As most of you know, child care is part of Ms Stephens' ministerial portfolio. This is a summary of our discussion with the Minister.

### **Repeal of the Child Care BC Act**

The Provincial Legislature deleted Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Child Care BC Act on August 8. This means that:

- Assistance to Infant-Toddler Programs and schoolage spaces in licensed Family Child Care homes will not occur in January 2002. Assistance to other age groups and types of child care also will not proceed as described in the Act.
- The Financial Assistance Program in schoolage child care programs will continue until June 30, 2002.
- All child care contracts and grants that have been signed will be honoured until their stated expiry date.
- The Child Care Help Line will be available to respond to inquiries from parents, providers and others.

We are keenly disappointed that government chose to take this step despite the many letters they received urging them to reconsider. We must, however, continue to work with government to get the best system we can for BC's children.

### **Minister Stephens' Intention**

The Minister has told us that she intends to work with community groups of parents, providers and others to develop a sustainable child care plan for BC. Her stated vision is a coordinated system of early childhood development services for all families with child care as the cornerstone providing a touch point in communities for a broad spectrum of early childhood development and family support programs. She has told us that she wants a plan that makes services for children 0 - 6 as universal as possible, ensures child care services are more available, accessible and affordable for families and creates a more stable, predictable, and sustainable child care system for providers. Her first concern is support to Infant-Toddler care.

The timelines are short as the plan must be ready to present to Treasury Board in November for inclusion in the new Budget on February 19, 2002. Carole James is taking the lead role in developing the plan and in arranging limited consultation over the next 6 weeks or so.

## What You Can Do

1. Let the Premier know that affordable quality child care remains our top priority. That means more letters, e-mail messages, faxes and phone calls from individuals and groups calling on the government to do what is right regarding child care. **Copy your letters, e-mails, etc to Minister Stephens**. We are told that these messages are most effective when they cite real life examples of:
  - how the availability of affordable quality child care (or the lack of it) has affected families' ability to work, seek more education and provide for themselves; and/or
  - how participation in affordable quality child care programs has made a difference for a particular young child in terms of healthy development and positive learning outcomes; and/or
  - how participation in affordable quality child care has played a key role in enabling a family to cope more effectively with the demands of their parenting role.
2. Visit your MLA to help him or her to understand these same messages.
3. Send your MLA messages (letters, e-mails, faxes and phone calls) from individuals and groups in your community. Help them to recognize that changes to the Child Care BC Act means that the child care crisis still exists for children and families. Ask them what they intend to do to address this issue.
4. Invite Minister Stephens to meetings with community groups so that we can talk about child care together.
5. Invite MLAs to local community events where they have opportunities to learn more about the importance of child care to BC families.

We now have a better idea of where the government might be headed. However, no decisions have yet been made. We must ensure that our voices are heard once again! Keep the pressure on - there is reason to believe our messages to government make a difference!

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