

Child Care Advocacy Forum

#300 - 210 W. Broadway
Vancouver, BC V5Y 3W2
Phone: (604) 515-6257
Toll Free: 1-877-361-1116
Fax: (604) 709-5662
www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum

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 of BC

Westcoast Child Care
Resource Centre

Western Canada Family
Child Care Association
of BC

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FEDERAL ELECTION 2006 DON'T TURN BACK THE CHILD CARE CLOCK!

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On January 23, 2006 Canadians will go to the polls to elect a new federal government. **At last, child care is emerging as a critical issue in this campaign.** Families, child care providers and advocates must send candidates and voters a strong message that there can be no turning back.

During the last federal election, in June 2004, the federal Liberal party promised a national child care system based on the principles of Quality, Universality, Accessibility and Developmental programs. They committed \$5 billion over 5 years to start building the system.

What's Been Delivered?

When the federal Liberal minority government fell in November, 2005 some but not all of the child care promise had been fulfilled.

- The 2005/06 federal budget included funds for child care and each province and territory received its Year 1 allocation.
- The federal government reached Agreements in Principle on Early Learning and Child Care with all 10 provinces.

Federal leadership and investment in building a quality child care system was supported by the federal New Democratic Party.

BC expects to receive \$633 million over 5 years for regulated child care for children under the age of 6 and has already spent much of the Year 1 money.

What's Been Proposed?

The federal Liberals are proposing to extend their financial commitment to early learning and child care until 2015. They will add \$6 billion to the existing \$5 billion commitment and will continue to transfer the funds to provinces to use to build child care systems.

The federal Conservatives are proposing fundamental changes to federal involvement in child care. They will spend \$10.9 billion over 5 years to:

- Give families a taxable allowance of \$1200 a year for every child under the age of 6. The funds can be spent as the family 'chooses'.
- Provide tax credits valued at \$250 million to employers and community organizations to create new child care spaces.
- Honour the current Year 1 (2005/06) of federal funding under existing Agreements with provinces but cancel funding commitments for Years 2 – 5.

What's At Stake?

If implemented, the Conservative proposal means that as of March 31, 2006 existing federal funds that can be used to begin building a child care system for BC will be gone.

And, while many families need higher incomes, providing \$100 a month to families for each child is **not** a child care program or solution.

Here's why:

- \$100 a month does not come close to covering the cost of quality care and certainly doesn't replace a parent's income.
- A direct payment to families does nothing to create quality child care spaces. While proponents say it supports choice, real choice depends on affordable, accessible, quality options.
- This approach provides no accountability for over \$10 billion in public expenditures. Canadians have a right to expect that public spending will lead to improvements in access, quality and affordability of care.

If this approach prevails, BC could lose close to \$550 million intended for regulated child care. Tell your federal candidates that you expect a sustained commitment to a publicly funded, high quality child care system that promotes healthy child development and meets diverse family needs.