

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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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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BC WORKS IF CHILD CARE WORKS Provincial Election 2005 - Fact Sheet #3 School Age Care - The Forgotten Service

On May 17, British Columbians go to the polls to elect a new provincial government. After 4 years of devastating cuts to child care, this election is critical for BC children, families and child care providers. **Quality school age child care** has been particularly hard hit and requires focused advocacy during the election campaign. Here's why:

- ✓ In 2001, the new BC government began to phase out the Funding Assistance Program (FAP) under which 15,000 licensed school age child care spaces were available to BC families for \$7 a day.
- ✓ As funding for these spaces was withdrawn, fees increased and many families had no choice but to withdraw their children from licensed school age care. Significant cuts to subsidy eligibility made the situation even worse for low- and moderate-income families.
- ✓ The provincial government replaced previous funding mechanisms with the Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF). CCOF is based on enrolment. Programs who lost children because families couldn't afford to pay higher fees receive less than programs that are full, often because they serve higher income communities.
- ✓ Federal transfer payments to BC since 2001 are dedicated to 'early childhood development' – for children from birth to 5 years of age. School age care (other than for Kindergarten children) wasn't eligible for even the small amount of federal funds BC allocated to child care.

As a result of these policies, the situation for school age children and the group and family providers who care for them worsened. A growing number of young children are on their own before and after school, and closures of BC school age programs continue to this day.

But the need has not gone away!

- ✓ In 2003, 209,500 BC children between the ages of 6 and 12 had mothers in the paid labour force. These children require before and after school care on regular school days and full-day care for up to 13 weeks of annual school closures.
- ✓ Yet, in 2002/03, there were only 23,089 spaces in licensed group programs and about 5000 spaces in licensed family child care homes for school age children.
- ✓ Quality school age child care supports children's development, builds children's sense of belonging in the community and helps prepare them to make a positive transition into adolescence.

Quality school age care needs to be adequately funded and part of the plan to move us away from a user fee system to a publicly funded child care system.

Ask your candidates what they will do to support quality school age care in your community.