

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 of BC

Westcoast Child Care
Resource Centre

Western Canada Family
Child Care Association
of BC

Funding and Support provided by:

Status of Women Canada
- BC/Yukon Region
through Coalition of Child
Care Advocates of BC



VANCOUVER
FOUNDATION

BC WORKS IF CHILD CARE WORKS Provincial Election 2005

Fact Sheet #1 - Keeping Our Eyes on the Prize

On May 17, 2005 British Columbians will go to the polls to elect our next provincial government. In the lead up to the election, the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum will develop election tools to help YOU:

- ✓ make child care a key election issue in your riding.
- ✓ secure a commitment from those seeking office to a publicly funded child care system that meets the needs of BC children and families.
- ✓ ensure that everyone who understands the importance of child care for our children, families and communities **gets out to vote**.

While there are a host of immediate child care issues facing children, families and caregivers – **elections are a time to focus on the big picture**.

Elections are a time to affirm our long-term vision for child care and to ensure that those seeking our votes share this vision and have a plan for moving it forward. A time to keep our eyes on the prize!

To get us started, this Fact Sheet outlines the Advocacy Forum's agenda for meeting the child care needs of BC's children from birth to 12 years of age and addresses five common misconceptions about our position. This will give you the facts you need to advance a child care advocacy agenda.

Our 7 Point Agenda

The Advocacy Forum's Agenda for child care in BC is supported by a solid body of research that demonstrates the need to move from the current patchwork of user fee services to an integrated publicly funded child care system. We advocate for a child care system that:

1. Entitles all children access to quality child care and early childhood programs, regardless of their families' economic or employment status.
2. Honours and respects the diversity of BC's children, families and communities and is inclusive of all children and families.
3. Provides families with choices from a range of coordinated, quality, licensed and regulated child care programs.
4. Is publicly funded through the tax system and affordable for all families who need or want it.
5. Provides caregivers with training opportunities, wages, benefits and working conditions that are commensurate with their education, experience and responsibilities.
6. Meets and exceeds standards that are associated with quality and positive childhood development.
7. Is complemented by a comprehensive family policy that includes extended parental leave and progressive family/work policies.

Five Misconceptions About Our Agenda

From time to time misconceptions about our position emerge in the media, government or the community. As we begin our pre-election work, we want to address some of these misconceptions so that future discussions can be based on the facts.

1. *Some say that we don't really believe in parental choice.*

Not so. We support families' right to decide if, when and how their children participate in child care and early childhood programs. But, real choice only has meaning if there are real options. The 'choices' families make today are not necessarily the choices they would make if and when they have quality, affordable, accessible options. Our goal is to make sure that a range of such options are there for families when and if they want or need them.

2. *Some say that we only support public funding for centre-based child care.*

Not so. We support publicly funded full and part-time programs in centre, family and in-home settings. Research indicates that quality care promotes positive childhood outcomes. As a result, we believe that publicly funded child care services should be licensed, regulated and accountable for using public funds to promote quality and affordability – regardless of where the child care service is delivered.

3. *Some say that we don't support stay-at-home parents.*

Not so. Child care is a central piece – but not the only piece – of a comprehensive family policy. That is why we support extended parental leave, family friendly workplaces and full access to services for children whether or not their parents are in the paid labour force. Yet, even with well developed family policies, leaving paid employment will never be a choice or option for the vast majority of working parents. Supports for children of stay-at-home parents can therefore complement, but will never replace, the need for publicly funded child care.

4. *Some say that because we support entitlement for all children, our position doesn't adequately address those most in need.*

Not so. We believe that the only effective way to meet children's and families' needs is by funding quality, stable services that are accessible to all with additional resources provided to meet the needs of those who face particular barriers or challenges. Just like public schools, libraries or parks, this approach builds communities and avoids the stigmatization, instability and exclusion associated with 'targetted' programs like BC's current child care subsidy program.

5. *Some say that our position makes it easy for parents to avoid their responsibility by placing their children in the care of 'strangers'.*

Not so. Families will always be their children's primary caregivers but children and families have never functioned in isolation of the wider community. Throughout history, extended families, villages, cultural and faith groups and social networks have played a key role in supporting families in their parenting role. Today, child care programs play this role for many families. The families and caregivers in quality child care are not strangers – they are friends to rejoice with over children's progress, shoulders to cry on when times are tough and the circle to draw on for parenting advice and wisdom. Families who have been lucky enough to find quality child care know that child care builds community. Surely, this should be more than a matter of luck.