

## **Once again - Campbell gets it wrong for children**

17 Jun 05

"It looks like Premier Campbell hasn't learned from his mistakes on child care during his first term of office," says Susan Harney, Chair of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC in response to yesterday's Cabinet appointments.

After the 2001 election, the Premier created a false and dangerous separation by appointing one Minister of State for Early Childhood Development and another Minister of State for Child Care. His government then made massive cuts to child care funding and used federal funds for Early Childhood on anything but child care. Near the end of its first term, the government seemed to agree that this was no way to build integrated, comprehensive services for young children and their families. While provincial child care funding wasn't restored, child care and early childhood development were at least brought into the same Ministry.

"This time round our hope was for an integrated policy approach," says Harney. But it's not to be. Yesterday, Campbell appointed Linda Reid as the Minister of State for Childcare and Shirley Bond as the Minister Responsible for Early Learning and Literacy (in addition to her responsibility as the new Minister of Education).

"Early learning and literacy are integral to quality child care," says Ruth Bancroft, a Vancouver early childhood educator. "Most of BC's young children are in some form of child care, whether a part-day preschool program or a full-day setting. So this is the very best place to invest in high quality programs that promote their overall growth and development. That's what early learning is really all about."

The Cabinet split also suggests that BC's plans for spending new federal funds will continue to be a problem. As part of the federal government's promise to build a national child care system, BC stands to receive over \$600 million in the next five years. To date, the federal government has negotiated bi-lateral Agreements-in-principle with 5 provinces and BC will likely sign a similar Agreement soon. Interestingly, the Agreements signed to date are named "Moving Forward on Early Learning and Child Care". In the new Cabinet who will be responsible for the BC Agreement? Bond or Reid?

"We don't think it's a coincidence that Premier Campbell deliberately split responsibility for the two elements covered by federal/provincial agreements," says Sharon Gregson, BC Director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. "If he thinks we are going to stand by while his government spends federal funds on part-time, narrowly defined 'literacy programs' that don't meet the needs of working families, he best think again."