



FEDERAL DEALS ARE NO REPLACEMENT FOR PROVINCIAL ACTION

Over the last few weeks, the federal government has signed child care agreements-in-principle with Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario, and has reached a verbal agreement with Alberta. These 'deals' flow from the federal government's election promise to provide \$5 billion to provinces and territories over the next 5 years for a national child care system.

The promised federal funds have not yet come to BC or any other province or territory. They are included in the proposed federal budget under discussion in Ottawa. While the federal NDP has agreed to support this budget, the other Opposition parties have not. If the federal government falls before the budget is passed, the child care agreements will have no standing.

Stan Hagen, BC's Minister for Children and Family Development, reports that he is involved in on-going discussions with Ottawa and that a BC deal is imminent. Given that this deal is being negotiated in the middle of a provincial election – it is essential that every party seeking office makes a public commitment to signing and honouring a deal that contains the key building blocks of the child care system children and families need.

To make a real difference, a BC deal must include a commitment to:

- ✓ Build a child care system based on the principles of Quality, Universality, Accessibility and Developmental Programming.
- ✓ Invest in regulated community-based non-profit child care services.
- ✓ Use federal funds to complement rather than replace provincial investments.
- ✓ Consult with communities to develop Action Plans with measurable targets.
- ✓ Be publicly accountable for reporting on progress made on availability, affordability and quality.

As the deals signed to date show us – this is possible but not inevitable. Here's why:

- ✓ The agreements signed to date include common language and language that is specific to each province. Some areas covered by common language include commitments to:
 - Previously agreed to principles of Quality, Universal Inclusion, Accessibility and Developmental Programming.
 - Invest in regulated care (as defined by the province).
 - Work with the community to develop 5 year Action Plans.
 - Report publicly on measurable targets.(The full agreements are available at www.sdc.gc.ca. Follow the "What's New" links.)
- ✓ The agreements with Manitoba and Saskatchewan are the strongest and include a commitment to invest federal funds in regulated community-based non-profit care.
- ✓ Ontario's agreement leaves the door open for big box child care chains to set up shop in Ontario and access public funds. Alberta says it will follow suit.
- ✓ BC's track record on using federal funds to replace provincial cuts to child care and on 'anything but child care' is cause for concern about the current discussions underway.

It is clear that the federal government is not prepared to require that public funds be spent on regulated community-based non-profit child care and may waver on other key principles. Once again it rests with the community to hold government accountable.

Ask your candidates if they are prepared to meet or exceed the standards set in the child care agreements with Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

COALITION OF CHILD CARE ADVOCATES OF BC