

Child Care Campaign - School Board Lobby (2006)

SPEAKER'S NOTES

The following information has been developed to assist you in your presentation to your local school board. Your goal is to gain their support in pressuring our MLAs and MPs to commit to work for the reinstatement of the federal child care funding, as promised in the 2005 federal-provincial agreements.

How to get on the agenda for your local school board meeting:

- **See the School Board Contacts list in this kit for your local contact numbers.**
- Contact your local school board chairperson, secretary-treasurer or superintendent.
- One or more of these people usually make up the agenda for meetings.
- Most school boards allow about 10 min. for presentations, followed by a 5 minute question period.
- You may want to ask your local school board what their format will be, so you can be prepared.

Preparation tips:

In preparing your presentation you may want to consider the following:

If possible, your presentation should **focus on an issue or a story you have experienced first hand** personally, or through your family, friends, neighbours, your work, your volunteer roles etc. Make sure your facts are correct! Ensure you are credible. Don't say things you can't prove.

Give a context for your comments. Describe how B.C. child care has already suffered significant cuts. This federal funding is critical for those parents currently on waiting lists for affordable child care in this community. These parents may include you, your neighbours, your friends or your family. **Quality, affordable, accessible child care is needed in this community.**

Remember that you are not able to use the names of other people (parents, children, clients) if you are relating a story, as that would be a breach of confidentiality. Please speak only in generalities when you are speaking about others' experiences.

Relax. Your school board will be patient and considerate of you during your presentation. Focus on what you know. You are not expected to be an expert. Look board members in the eye. Be confident in the power of your message.

Remember to distribute the Handout and Sample Resolutions for all board members to read!

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1) Introduction:

Introduce yourself by describing your ties to the school district/community you are speaking in.

Identify if you are a member of the community, a parent and/or grandparent, a volunteer for community organizations, or if you hold any formal community roles. Also explain your work background, if applicable to the subject.

By capturing your full community, family and work roles the school board will be able to understand more about who you are in a broad context. This will strengthen the value of your message.

2) Presentation focus:

- ✓ The federal child care funding as promised in the 2005 federal-provincial agreements must be reinstated.
- ✓ Child care funding received by provinces must be dedicated to child care.
- ✓ B.C. needs to restore and commit more provincial funding to child care.
- ✓ **Quality, affordable, accessible child care is needed in this community.**

3) How school boards can help:

1. By passing the resolutions (that you've handed out to board members) and,
2. By sending a copy of the resolution(s), when passed, to:
 - Prime Minister Stephen Harper
 - Federal Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Diane Finley
 - Premier Gordon Campbell
 - Provincial Minister of State for Child Care Linda Reid
 - Provincial Minister of Child and Family Development Stan Hagen
 - The local MLA and MP seeking her/his support for the resolution
 - And, by providing our child care campaign with a copy of school board letters.

Provide support for your request by stating that Vancouver School Board has already passed these resolutions on October 17, 2005 and March 8, 2006.

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4) Presentation outline:

Points to consider including:

B.C. is in serious need of child care funding:

There are not enough affordable child care spaces in B.C.

- It is not uncommon for parents to sign up on long wait lists at more than one child care centre as soon as they become pregnant. After the child is born and they really need child care, they are often faced with the reality that there are still no available spaces.

Even in this context, the B.C. government:

- by 2004 had cut child care funding in B.C. by \$40 million.
- cut subsidies for low income families;
- and drastically cut the wages and benefits of quality child care workers in B.C. (some of whom agreed to have their wages and benefits cut severely just to keep their centres open).

Federal child care funding

- In 2005, the federal government committed \$5 billion dollars over the next five years to build a national child care system and signed agreements with the provinces to confirm this commitment.
- The intended national child care system is based on the QUAD principles supported by child care research and advocates across Canada. These principles are: Quality, Universally inclusive, Accessible, and Developmental child care.
- In January 2006, the federal Conservatives were elected as a new minority government. They soon announced they would not honour the signed federal-provincial child care funding agreements.
- They intend to cut the national child care funding in early 2007 and implement a taxable family allowance of \$1200/year (only for every child under 6) that parents can 'choose' to use for child care.
- While any contribution to support Canadian families is welcome, parents know that this taxable family allowance does not come close to covering the real cost of child care.
- Because the new family allowance is taxable, it amounts to significantly less than \$100/month per child and does not address after-school care for children 6 and older.
- It is important to understand that the taxable family allowance does nothing to create the child care spaces that are so desperately needed.

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The B.C. government must direct federal child care funds to child care.

- The B.C. government held child care “consultation meetings” across the province in November 2005.
- Child care advocates, child care workers and concerned citizens were not able to make any presentations at these meetings.
- The government’s presentation at these meetings indicated that they plan to direct the federal child care funding to instead fund education and the Premier’s campaign promise on literacy.
- Education is important and it should be given a higher priority in the provincial government’s budget.
- However, taking funding that belongs to child care is not the answer, especially when there is such an urgent need for affordable, accessible child care in B.C.
- We want to ensure that when the federal funding is reinstated, it is appropriately directed to child care and not other provincial initiatives.

Why is the B.C. government silent on child care?

- The BC government was supposed to develop a *Child Care Action Plan* based on the feedback from these “consultation” meetings last November, and issue the plan in January 2006.
- To date, they have not put forward their *Child Care Action Plan*, and they have been silent about the federal Conservatives’ decision to not honour the federal child care funding agreement with B.C.
- In fact, the B.C. government did not even mention child care in their February 2006 Throne Speech.
- Other provinces have spoken out against the Conservatives’ decision on child care, including Ontario Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Quebec.
- This is no time for the B.C. government to be silent.

What do we stand to lose in B.C.?

- The national initiative would have provided \$455 million for additional child care spaces, over the remaining three years of the agreement.
- All recent increases in child care spending in BC have been paid for with federal child care funds. This includes increases to the Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) that many child care centres rely on to: keep their doors open, keep parent fees affordable, subsidize child care workers wages, upgrade equipment and facilities to ensure child safety
- Unless the province is prepared to pick up the costs, child care centres will have to make up the difference by:
 - Raising parent fees
 - Laying off workers
 - Cutting programs
 - Closing their doors

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- This is why it is so important to act now. We must put pressure on our MLAs to ensure the provincial government takes action in the interest of B.C. children. We must also pressure our MPs to ensure they commit to working for the reinstatement of the federal child care funding.

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