

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT APRIL 2003

Dear friends and supporters,

Usually May is a time for celebration. For over 20 years the child care community has claimed May a time to honour the good work of child care workers throughout our province, to celebrate the work we do and to re energize ourselves to continue the "fight" to move child care forward, to build an affordable, quality, accessible service for families. In good faith we've struggled together, always believing that there was hope. Maybe progress didn't move as quickly as we wanted, but we believed that there was a chance.

But this year is different. The cuts are too deep. The chaos is everywhere. The children are hurting. And this provincial government lies again and again and again. So this year, many child care advocates around the province are saying enough is enough. When over \$50 million dollars have been cut, there is NOTHING TO CELEBRATE!!

So for many of us there will be no parades, no picnics, no celebratory get-togethers. Instead there will be solemn resolution that we will do what is necessary to defeat this government. That is where our energy will flow. Campbell's government policies that slash the heart out of programs, disregard wage agreements and cut back support to families who are struggling to make ends meet are a crime. Even the United Nations has identified British Columbia as a place where women's rights are eroding.

The Coalition Board is working hard to work with other organizations that are also fed up with this government. Thanks to the generosity of the BCGEU we've printed bumper stickers to show our disgust. We've included one here with your newsletter. We are asking you to display it in solidarity where you can. We are determined to do all we can to sustain our message of a publicly funded child care system that is affordable and accessible to parents. One where quality is the norm not the exception.

\$50 million cut.... No wonder we're in no mood to party!!

Susan Harney
Chair

"You must work – we must work – to make the world worthy of it's children"
Pablo Casals

COALITION OF CHILD CARE ADVOCATES OF BC
Child Care Month
Nothing to Celebrate!
May 2003

For the past 20 years, we have taken time in May to honour and celebrate child care. The tradition began in the early 1980's when the BC Daycare Action Coalition asked the City of Vancouver to proclaim Daycare Week. Our first slogan - Good daycare is good for kids – is as relevant today as it was then.

Over time, May has become Child Care Month in BC. Mayors pass proclamations, governments produce posters, child care organizations raise the profile of child care in their communities, advocates push the public policy agenda and all of us take time to celebrate the tireless and remarkable efforts of the caregivers across BC who are there for children, families and communities day in and day out.

But – this year is different. This year, we face an unprecedented erosion of the progress we achieved over the last two decades. Here are the facts:

- Over a 3 year period, the province will cut over \$50 million from child care
- Over 10,000 families have lost all or part of their child care subsidy
- Enrolment of children from low and moderate income families in licensed programs is down
- More children are now in unlicensed settings or on their own before and after school
- Wages for many child care providers are being rolled back to 1998 levels
- Programs have closed and more will close in the near future.

This year – there is NOTHING to celebrate! So, instead of parties, parades and picnics, we are encouraging you to take action that mourns the losses, highlights the critical nature of the situation and holds our elected leaders to account for their broken promises. Here are some ideas:

- Order copies of the “Nothing to Celebrate” Bumper Sticker at info@cccabc.bc.ca and post them all over the community (Due to limited numbers of stickers, packages of 25 stickers will be mailed on a first come, first serve basis)
- Hold a mock funeral or a silent vigil outside the local MLA's office
- Wear gray arm bands
- Ask a local reporter to cover the ‘real child care stories’ in your community
- And once again - write, call, or email the Premier, Lynn Stephens and your MLA to tell them that **because of their actions – there is nothing to celebrate.**

For information on campaigns as they develop, stay tuned to www.cccabc.bc.ca

The following organizations join the Coalition of Child Care Advocates in endorsing this message: BC Association of Child Care Services, Early Childhood Educators of BC, School Age Child Care Association of BC and Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre.

Child Care Advocacy Forum

#300 - 210 W. Broadway
Vancouver, BC
Phone: (604) 515-6257
Toll Free: 1-877-361-1116
Fax: (604) 709-5662
www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum

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

Westcoast Child Care
Resource Centre

Western Canada Family
Child Care Association
of BC

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- BC/Yukon Region
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Care Advocates of BC



VANCOUVER
FOUNDATION

THE NEW INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING AND CARE MARCH 2003

What does it say?

On March 13, 2003 the federal government signed a *Multilateral Framework on Early Childhood Learning and Care* with 9 provinces and 3 territories. (Quebec, while supporting the principles of this agreement, maintains sole responsibility over its social policy and makes significant provincial investments in child care.)

This agreement builds on the recent federal budget allocation of \$935 million to help improve access to quality child care and early learning opportunities for young children. \$35 million is for aboriginal child care and \$900 million will be transferred to provinces and territories to invest in regulated early learning and child care programs for children under six.

The \$900 million will be transferred to provinces and territories over a five year period. \$25 million is to be spent in the first year, (2003/04), \$75 million in the second, and \$150 million, \$300 million and \$350 million in the third, fourth and fifth years respectively.

These funds are over and above the federal dollars that provinces and territories currently receive under the Agreement on Early Childhood Development signed in September 2000.

The *Multilateral Framework of Early Childhood Learning and Care* includes objectives, areas of investment, effective approaches and public reporting requirements for the new funds.

Some of the key features of the agreement are:

- The federal funds are to be spent on regulated programs "...that meet quality standards that are established and monitored by provincial/ territorial governments."
- Primarily, funding is to go to direct care in settings such as child care centres, family child care homes and preschools.
- Types of investment can include capital and operating funds, fee subsidies, wage enhancements, training, professional development and support, quality assurance and parent information and referral.
- Using 2002/03 as a baseline, provinces and territories are to report annually on their progress. Public reporting will include information on provincial/territorial expenditures on all early learning and child care programs and services and on indicators of availability, affordability and quality.

What does it mean?

On the positive side, the new agreement means that:

- The federal government has acknowledged that it has a role to play in developing a national child care strategy – which we applaud.
- The federal government has heard our message that funds must be spent on regulated child care that meets standards associated with quality.
- The annual reporting requirements put some pressure on provinces to focus on direct care rather than exclusively on information and resources.

However, we have a number of remaining concerns:

- \$900 million does not come close to meeting the need. Even the Social Policy Committee of the National Liberal Party Caucus called for \$10.9 billion over 4 years for a child care program.
- Only \$100 million is allocated for the first two years. In BC, this means about \$2.5 million in year 1 and \$7.5 million in year 2 – not enough to be an effective incentive to reverse the province's plans for more child care cuts.
- The program only addresses child care for children under the age of six and is silent on school-aged care.
- There are no targets and timelines so provinces and territories are not accountable for meeting any benchmarks.

What is our response?

The Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care is a small but important first step in building a cross Canada child care program.

But, if this agreement is to meet its promise **the federal government** must:

- "Reprofile the funds" so that more is available in the first two years of the program.

And, **our provincial government** must:

- Use the federal dollars to complement, not replace, provincial child care spending.
- As a first step, direct new federal dollars to licensed family and group child care programs which meet the agreement's definition of 'regulated' and set the benchmark for quality care in BC.
- Ensure that a fair share of BC's Early Childhood Initiatives Funds are spent on child care – a cornerstones of a comprehensive early childhood strategy.

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC) Update

For the last 8 years, it has been my privilege to be the BC representative to the Board of the CCAAC. During that time, we faced many challenges and disappointments. Child care all but disappeared from the federal agenda; in many provinces, including our own, funds flowing from the federal/provincial Early Childhood Development Agreement went to 'anything but child care'; and the CCAAC, along with other women's organizations, lost core funding. At times, we questioned how we would find a way to advance a child care system that meets the needs of all of Canada's children.

But, in spite of shrinking resources and a hostile political climate – the CCAAC hung in. We were determined to renew our organization and the child care advocacy movement so that we would be effective advocates in the changing social policy context in Canada. And, our progress has been significant.

- ✓ Our Board of Directors represents the new leadership of Canada's child care advocacy movement. Our provincial and territorial reps come from or are closely connected with the child care advocacy organizations and networks in their regions. As a result, we are sending consistent advocacy messages to all provincial and territorial governments and are working more closely with our sister advocacy organizations and groups.
- ✓ We have stronger links with our social justice partners through our Council of Child Care Advocates. The Council brings together the geographic reps to the CCAAC Board and representatives from our allied sectors – such as labour, students, the anti-poverty movement, and women. The role of the Council is to advise the CCAAC on advocacy strategies, messages and initiatives. In turn, our Council partners take our campaigns back to their sectors.
- ✓ Our very successful "Parent Voices" Project is supporting the child care advocacy voice of parents in BC and other provinces. Through this project, parents are undertaking a range of campaigns and are active participants in our Council of Advocates. Parent Voices maintains an active website with lots of tools and resources - www.childcareadvocacy.ca/parent_voices
- ✓ The CCAAC website is in the process of being updated and revamped to better serve our communication needs. Bookmark it and check it regularly - www.childcareadvocacy.ca
- ✓ The CCAAC has received funding from Status of Women Canada for two important initiatives. The first, *SOS: Stating and Solving the Childcare Crisis in Canada*, is designed to build consensus on policies and strategies to remedy the pan-Canadian child care crisis. The second, *Making the Links*, will allow us to do outreach work in and with more provinces and territories.
- ✓ We have initiated and participated in advocacy campaigns to send politicians a strong message about the need for a significant federal financial commitment to a 5 year plan for a pan Canadian child care system. Some of our campaigns have included Children Can't Wait, Not Nearly Enough and the more recent Memo to Manley.

- ✓ Most importantly, we have helped put child care back on the federal agenda. Through the new Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Care, the federal government has acknowledged that it has a role to play in developing a national child care strategy and has heard our message that funds must be spent on regulated child care. While we need more federal money and improved accountability measures – this is a step forward.

So, while we still have our work cut out for us, the CCAAC is ready and able to work with our provincial and sectoral partners to move our agenda forward. We should feel proud of the contribution that BC is making to this progress. In addition to the active support of the Coalition, three of our very best BC advocates are now working for and with the CCAAC. Maryann Bird is our Executive Director in Ottawa, Dianne Goldberg is our Parent Voices (PV) Project Consultant and Sharon Gregson is one of the BC parents in the PV Network and an active participant in our last two Council of Advocates' meetings.

This June, my terms as the BC Board rep to the CCAAC come to an end. The Coalition of Child Care Advocates is nominating Lynell Anderson for the BC Board position. Those of you who know Lynell will know that she has the skills, the knowledge and the grace to represent us very well indeed.

I want to thank the Coalition and advocates across BC for your support over the years. I have had the chance to work closely with wonderful women from coast to coast to coast and will value these friendships for years to come. It has been my honour to take the BC voice to the CCAAC table and I look forward to remaining an active member of the pan Canadian child care advocacy movement.

Rita Chudnovsky

LETTER FROM A FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDER

Dear Premier Campbell,

I would like to speak out against the government's plan to cut funding for all the CCRR's and the reasons behind it.

I was not familiar with the endeavor of applying for a license since I had never done it before. Neither did I know anybody who could give me advice. I was kind of fumbling in the dark. One day, when I was checking out the advertisements of daycare providers' column, I saw the one put out by the Child Care Resource and Referral Program (CCRR). I contacted them and they sent out their representative to visit me within a short time. I received lots of information from them concerning the different procedures I had to follow in order to be licensed. I was also recommended to attend the 'Good Beginnings' Family Child Care program for potential childcare providers at Kwantlen College in the Richmond Campus. Back then, I was a nervous back road driver. If not for the staff of CCRR's who arranged a ride for me, I would never have made it.

I benefited greatly from visiting the Child Care Resource and Referral Program's office, getting advice for my daycare, borrowing resource material and equipment and attending numerous workshops, to further educate myself about the needs of the children under my care. Another big benefit of being a member of this program is that, they referred to me potential clients who phoned in to their office. It saved me a huge amount of advertising expense, which I wouldn't have been able to afford to keep my business going.

At the present, the government plans to discontinue its funding to the CCRR in the year 2004 and transfer the money to licensed daycare instead. At first glance, it seems very attractive and helpful. But as I sit and think through it, it dawns on me that it actually means caregivers will be losing a very valuable and essential support.

Not all the services initiated by the NDP government are bad. CCRR's do not have a big budget, they have cut staff and cut hours in the last few years. Now every minute of the staff's working time and every inch of their office space is well used. If the government really means to give more support to licensed home daycare providers, it should not give with one hand and take away much more with the other hand.

With the pending of funding cuts to CCRR's it is apparent that the real victims of this new practice will be the children. If the government is planning to dismantle the present Child Care Resource and Referral Program (which is already doing an excellent job) and create another one (which will be a waste of tax payers' money), why not use the money to strengthen the existing one? Without the CCRR Program, the beneficiaries of this new grant will certainly not be the licensed family daycare the government intends to help.

Sincerely,
(Mrs.) Joanna Smith
Delta, B.C
*(excerpts from an email sent to the Premier,
February 19th, 2003)*

Update from Campbell River – The Day of Mourning

Our local television station helped us in producing a 15 minute information program promoting the Community Meeting on Child Care and discussing the March 31st Day of Mourning. They ran this program for a week leading up to March 31. They also posted the meeting on their message board, as well as flashing a banner requesting people join the rally on the 31st. One of the local radio stations had the meeting and rally posted on their events board and they carried the Day of Mourning as a news item throughout the day.

On March 26th we held a community child care meeting with the question “What role does child care play in the health and wellbeing of our community?” We had a panel of 4 people from the community, which included; a speech/language pathologist who is a mother of a 3 year old and an 11 year old who attend group child care programs. She is also the chair person of a non-profit child care society. The director of the John Howard society, a Supported Child Care Coordinator who is also the mother of a child with special needs and our 4th panelist was the director of the transition house.

We had over 75 people attend this meeting. It was especially exciting for us to see some people there that we didn't even know! The Mayor and 2 representatives from our MLA's office attended, as well as people from the school district. We were thrilled with the variety of people who showed their support for child care by attending this meeting. Two people from Courtenay, a community 30 miles away also attended the meeting. We had excellent support from one of our local newspapers who gave child care front page coverage for 7 weeks, and counting. The reporter was very good at explaining the complex issues that were causing such concern within the child care community. A group of people volunteered to spearhead an advocacy coalition and another group formed to work on organizing a rally.

On March 31st, which we declared the **day of mourning for child care in BC**, we had over 60 people come out to walk from the community centre to the MLA's office and then over to the lawn of the municipal hall. Some of the marchers chanted “75% cuts, that sucks” as they walked along through chilling rain, hail and wind. Several child care programs in Campbell River and Quadra Island suspended services for the day as their way of mourning the changes to funding for child care. Staff were stationed outside the centres to provide information to any people who came by, as well as, form little marches offside of a couple of popular traffic routes. Other centres chose to remain open and hand out information. The ECCE program at North Island College pledged their support and wore their armbands to classes and practicums.

People were encouraged to speak to their employers, neighbours, relatives (and anyone else who would listen) about the future of child care. We gave out over 300 grey arm bands for people to wear as a symbol of our sadness for the lack of government will to affect positive change for children and families in BC. Several parents visited our local MLA as private meetings. One parent circulated a petition and took that in making a presentation to our Municipal Council. The Councilors passed a resolution to write our MLA, Rod Visser, and Lynn Stevens stating their support of child care as critical in creating a healthy community, and concern for government's lack of support for this issue. One parent has made a presentation to her PAC and asked for them to take an active part in considering child care as part of the health of children. A presentation to School District Administrators is planned. The local television station did a follow-up 30 minute program recapping the concerns and events and they have aired that several times. Letters to the Editor in our local newspaper continue to be published. A response letter from Lynn Stephens was published and stimulated other letters, as well as, editorial comment.

We are now exploring overtures to join other community action groups. A group for A Day of Defiance has formed.

From Kathy Rae

Parent Voices: Making the Case for Child Care

What is Parent Voices?

Parent Voices is about advocating for child care, children and communities. It is about parents' efforts to influence provincial/territorial and federal government child care policies and funding. We have an urgent message – our children need and deserve a quality child care system that is supported by public funding.

In BC, parents are speaking up about today's child care issues. Many have written letters to the Premier; called and/or met with their MLA's to "talk child care"; have signed their names (along with more than 800 others) on the BC Parent Voices pre budget petition; are continuing to send thousands of diapers with a "stop the child care cuts" message to the Premier, Finance Minister, and MLA's; and many are continuing to join advocates in a range of local and provincial child care campaigns. BC Parent Voices is working with the Coalition of Child Care Advocates and others to make sure the public and our elected MLA's hear the truth about the impacts of this government's policies and over \$50 million budget cuts to licensed child care.

Across Canada, from coast to coast to coast, **Parent Voices** is supporting the involvement of parents in advocating for a quality, publicly funded, child care system that meets the varied needs of families and ensures the right of all children to access child care that:

- _ supports healthy childhood development;
- _ enables adults to work, study, upgrade skills and participate in their community;
- _ contributes to a more equitable role in society for women;
- _ contributes to reduce levels of family poverty; and
- _ contributes to Canada's economic well-being.

Parent Voices is working to develop a **pan-Canadian Parents' Network** which brings together parents from across the country. All parents are welcome to add their names to the Parent Voices e mail list and be a part of this virtual network. In each province/territory, we will identify one or more Parent Representatives who will have added opportunities and responsibilities in the Network. The Parent Representatives will stay connected with other parent advocates to share strategies and advocacy tools; to learn about successes and challenges; to participate in advocacy campaigns; and to bring parents' perspectives to the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. To add your name to the e mail list, or ask about the Parent's Network, info@parentvoices.ca

Through involvement in several recent pan-Canadian campaigns, many parents from across Canada urged the Finance Minister, Prime Minister, and Members of Parliament to end an era of broken promises, to get on with establishing a provincial/ territorial/ federal framework, and to commit to adequate public funding that will build and sustain a child care system. And, we have a long, long way to go!

For further information, check out the Parent Voices web pages on the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada's site at www.childcareadvocacy.ca or at www.parentvoices.ca .

Parent Voices is a two-year project sponsored by the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and funded by the Social Development Partnerships Program of Human Resources Development Canada.

Dianne Goldberg, Parent Voices Project Consultant

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC) A CAMPAIGN 2000 PROJECT

On March 7th the Coalition hosted the second of two forums as part of the Campaign 2000 project to raise awareness about ECEC and to strengthen community links between the ECEC sector and other sectors. In British Columbia the project partners are First Call and the Coalition and First Call hosted the initial forum on October 4th, 2002. All of the participants at the first forum were invited to attend the second and the majority did. However a handful of the twenty eight people in attendance were new participants.

The day included presentations by Rita Chudnovsky and Mab Oloman on the status of early learning and child care in the province and in Canada at large. They incorporated analysis of the impacts of recent policy changes in the province as well as the implications of the recent federal and provincial budgets for child care. A panel, comprised of Christine Jackson from Prince George (the North), Sabine Tanasiuk from Vancouver's inner city (Lower Mainland), Ann Marie Bagwell from the Comox Valley (Vancouver Island) and Bonnie McEwen from Nelson (West Kootenays), provided an overview of the child care issues in each of their regions and the strategies that are being used to address them. There was a distressing commonality among the issues presented. Clearly, as a result of the recent policy changes, child care in British Columbia is in disarray. All panellists emphasised cross-sectoral networking as an important component of strategic action.

Participants broke into three working groups to discuss: how to move current campaigns forward; how to build cross-sectoral support, and the implications of and response to provincial and federal budgets. The official forum report provides detailed information about the conclusions arrived at by each group. In summary the following themes and strategies were common to all three groups: the need to promote the long term vision of universally accessible high quality child care; the importance of accountability for public expenditures; and, the value of cross-sectoral understanding, cooperation and collaboration on behalf of services for children.

“Engaging Students in Advocacy”

Over a number of years, the Coalition has recognized the importance of encouraging students in Early Childhood Education training programs to understand their critical role as child care advocates. To meet this goal in the Vancouver area, we have established a long-standing tradition of sponsoring the “STUDENT ADVOCACY FORUM” – generally held in May each year.

Co-sponsored with Vancouver Community College, this day-long Saturday session draws over 125 students from Continuing Education ECE programs across the lower mainland. Our goal is to build their knowledge, skills, strategies and confidence in advocacy work. The day’s agenda begins with a keynote address and follows with a series of workshops on timely and topical themes. We have offered a variety of workshops, including:

“Hot issues of the Day”, “Advocating with Families”, “Advocating with Children”, “Presentation Tips”, “Effective Letter Writing”, and “Understanding the Funding and Politics of Child Care”

Coalition members, friends and activists in the community facilitate these workshops. Feedback from the students has been consistently positive in evaluating their learning and experiences. They appreciate the opportunity to meet with respected community advocates, the engaging and informative sessions and the broadening of their horizons. Most importantly, the Forum helps students recognize that advocacy and professionalism are complementary attributes that must go “hand-in-hand” for those who work in the child care community.

Is a “Student Advocacy Forum” something you would initiate in your region? Could you explore partnerships with your local Community College and activists in like-minded organizations to sponsor this kind of activity? Can we inspire you to educate, advocate and “pass the torch” to a new generation of child care providers? We would be delighted to share more details with you! Please contact Gyda Chud at 604.443.8416 for more information.

Update from Trail – Supporting “Nothing to Celebrate”

Hello from Trail, well we had lots to think about regarding child care month. We are going to support this [Nothing to Celebrate] action. We are canceling our two Toddle-a-Thons and instead sending out a notice to parents and caregivers (on gray paper) letting them know what this government is doing to families and our communities. We are also going to write an article to the local papers explaining why we are canceling the parades and give an update of what is going on in the child care field. We are meeting with our MLA on May 8th and will wear gray arm bands!

We need to support this action and hopefully it will make an impact!

Sue McIntosh