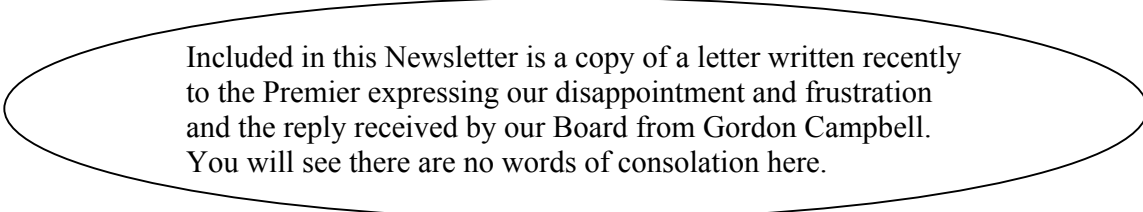


## Report From the Board

*April 22, 2002*

With all of the doom and gloom that we are hearing about these months it is difficult to find ways to celebrate this year's Child Care Month. In past years at our centre we have found ways to involve parents, children and staff in "Caring for your Caregiver", "Celebrating Quality", "Advocating, Educating and Celebrating" but this year it's just not the same. This May we've decided to set time and emotion aside to grieve what has been taken away and to brace ourselves for the disasters that may be just around the corner. Unfortunately, I know that our centre isn't alone.

Already the cuts to subsidy have impacted parents. Our communities are losing valuable quality spaces as some child care centres make the hard decision to close their doors. And the future of the early childhood registry remains uncertain. These coupled with cuts to Health, cuts to Education, changes to pay equity, the closures of some ECE training programs, cuts to Housing and Legal Aid (as well as others) have created a climate in our province that is devastating for many children and their families. And, where government policy is being referred to by many as "just plain mean".



Included in this Newsletter is a copy of a letter written recently to the Premier expressing our disappointment and frustration and the reply received by our Board from Gordon Campbell. You will see there are no words of consolation here.

So, grieve we will – because we have lots to grieve about. And something good can come from grief – a renewed determination to make things right. It has been a long time since we have seen the collective rise in support for social justice in our province. People who have never marched in a demonstration are there on the front line; some who have never written a letter to the editor have boldly put their anger to powerful words. Polls are showing a dramatic drop in the provincial Liberal support and many British Columbians are rallying the call "I didn't vote for this!"

Hopefully May will be a month of sunshine, so that our spirits can be renewed as we join with others to oppose the devolution of what we have worked so hard to accomplish. There will be rallies to attend, letters to write, and actions of protest to organize. There will be community coalitions to build and strengthen. And there will be the children – who need us more than ever – not to give up and give in but to stand strong on their behalf. Maybe that's the true meaning of Child Care month anyway.

Susan Harney  
On behalf of the Board of Directors  
CCCABC

## **Coalition Plans Provincial Summer Strategy Session**

On August 16-17, 2002, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC is hosting a provincial strategy session with advocates from across the province. The session will bring together activists from the child care and social justice movements who are committed to a publicly funded child care system that entitles all children access to quality child care.

This gathering comes at a critical time for child care in BC as children, families and child care providers experience a cross-ministerial assault on the progress that we have achieved over the last two decades. While our vision remains the same, we need to talk about how we can keep this vision alive and well.

Over the weekend, we will:

- ✓ Share information about the impact of changes in provincial child care policies
- ✓ Develop strategies to promote our child care agenda in the current climate
- ✓ Have some fun, share some laughs, renew our energy and sense of hope

Status of Women Canada has provided some funding for the session - including a contribution towards travel costs. To ensure that we have representatives from across BC, we are inviting community activists from each region and sector to join us for the weekend. If you are interested in representing your region or sector, and are committed to being a Coalition contact after the session, please contact us at 604-291-5725 or email [gregson@sfu.ca](mailto:gregson@sfu.ca).

We hope to be able to accommodate all those who are interested in attending and in doing follow up child care advocacy work. However, given our funding and planning expectations, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to meet all requests. We will post information from the session on our web site and invite all those interested to view the site frequently for information on a variety of child care advocacy topics.

***It was with great pride and joy that we watched our friend and staunch child care ally graciously accept the 2002 Simon Fraser University Alumni Award for Community Service. Even more thrilling than seeing Gyda actually receive the award was the emotion of listening to an amazing speech full of powerful and compelling messages. Gyda's speech was so inspiring that the Board of the Coalition asked to share it with our members. Enjoy...***

## **Gyda Chud Receives A Well Deserved Award**

It is indeed an honour to be honoured, and I thank my dear friend and colleague Sheila Davidson and Simon Fraser University for this acknowledgement. Alongside the honour comes a deep sense of humility and self-consciousness at individual recognition for work that is very much a collective effort.

As the first of tonight's recipients, I feel I can speak for all of us when I say that these awards are most importantly an opportunity to speak, not so much about ourselves, but rather on behalf of the causes and issues we hold dear and value as a community. In the Early Childhood and Child Care world, we see our work very much as a collective where it is shared in its challenge and joys. On behalf of the Early Childhood and Child Care community three key themes resonate at this evening's celebrations.

The first is the affirmation of the role that unconditional support and modeling play in our lives. How fortunate and blessed I was in my early years to be embraced in a family where unconditional love, support and nurturing were the foundation of what my parents valued in healthy child development. Day in and out, they modeled community involvement and commitment to social justice issues. Lessons in advocacy on behalf of humanistic values and against injustice surrounded us and sustained us, as did the centrality of community service. Tonight serves as an affirmation that we all need to play a part in serving as models and exemplars for all those we touch in our family and community lives.

The second theme or stream that this evening affirms is the journey of lifelong learning – a process that has its roots in early childhood and continues throughout our life's narrative. My time as a young adult at Simon Fraser University in the faculty of education was my introduction to the value of discovery based learning, a child centered orientation to education and the role of education in building children's self-esteem, self confidence, critical thinking skills and the capacity to grow as loving, caring and compassionate human beings. While these concepts are well known and well accepted today, they were radical if not revolutionary three decades ago, and I thank SFU for planting them powerfully as philosophical tenets for working with both children and adult learners.

The third theme is the world of early childhood and childcare itself. The research is abundant, resounding and compelling – the early years' experiences set the stage for ensuring that children live productive, constructive and fulfilling lives. This is the time to offer supports and services that children and families are entitled to, in order to reach their full promise and potential. How is it then that this childcare world remains so undervalued, under respected and under resourced?

How is it that we, as a society that purports to value children as our most important resource remain without a national child care policy and program? How is it that our political leaders at all levels of government talk so boldly about commitment to the early years at the same time as we witness profound cuts to services for children and families and a dismantling of long and hard won gains in programs and supportive policies? Clearly, these realities speak to the need for all of us collectively to assume our role as advocates and to build a strong community voice that truly places children and families at the heart of our priorities and public policy.

On behalf of the Early Childhood and Child Care community, I urge all of us – alumni, friends of Simon Fraser university and members of a caring civic society to join our work, stand up and stand strong for children.... And on behalf of the Child care community a sincere THANK YOU for recognizing our work and our community tonight.

# Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

Working for high quality, affordable, accessible, accountable child care

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March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2002

Premier Gordon Campbell  
PO Box 9041  
STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Campbell,

It will come as little surprise to you that the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC is shocked and angered by your government's attack on access to quality child care for children and families in BC. We are addressing our concerns to you because of your commitment to child care in the past and because, as Premier, you are responsible for the cross-ministerial assault underway on the progress that has been achieved over the last two decades.

While there are many far-reaching consequences of government's economic and social agenda on the well-being of children and families, we would highlight just a few of the most troubling decisions which will have a negative impact on child care.

1. The Ministry of Human Resources' intention to lower the income level of single parents with children; to consider single parents 'employable' when their youngest child turns three; and to reduce and restrict access to child care subsidies is beyond comprehension. As you know, low and moderate income families cannot find or afford quality child care now. MHR's actions will drive care for poor children further underground with potentially tragic consequences. And, while we know and research affirms that targeted programs are not effective - these actions belie your own New Era commitment to target child care funds to those most in need.
2. The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services decision to "defund" Child Care Resource and Referral Programs, One Stop Access sites, and the provincial services of Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre by 2004 will dismantle the community infrastructure that the child care community has built over the last 15 years. We always believed that you supported these efforts. You publicly took pride in the accomplishments of Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre, which grew out of countless hours of voluntary labour, with strong support from the City of Vancouver. The hypocrisy of claiming to support increased community capacity while your government tears it apart is an insult to all who work tirelessly to strengthen our ability to help each other.
3. To date, the Early Years Strategy being advanced by Minister Reid is completely silent on child care. While we know that Minister Reid does not have direct responsibility for child care, government is responsible for ensuring inter ministerial cooperation. An early years strategy that ignores the developmental needs of a majority of young children who are in

some form of child care is inexcusable. Minister Reid cites the conclusions of the Cleveland/Krashinsky cost benefit study to support her strategy. It is important to note that Cleveland and Krashinsky concluded that there is a \$2 return for every \$1 invested in “providing relatively high quality licensed child care to all children aged two to five years with employed parents, as well as enriched nursery school for children cared for primarily by their parents at home.” Unless your government is prepared to move towards a program like the one assessed by Cleveland and Krashinsky – citing their research in this way is unacceptable.

Moreover, despite repeated unsuccessful attempts to get specific information about your government’s intended use of the federal Early Childhood Development funds, we can only conclude that the province intends to significantly reduce its own expenditures, while offering reduced federal funding to a limited number of selected communities and projects. This contradicts your commitment to openness and transparency and minimizes the importance of the early years research that Minister Reid espouses.

4. Finally, the cumulative effect of these and other recent decisions by government makes the Ministry of Children and Family Development’s plan to reduce the number of children in care by increasing community and family capacity to care for and protect children a hollow promise. Without access to quality, affordable child care, families will be under even greater stress. Child care is a central element of a comprehensive strategy to support families in their capacity to raise their children.

For over twenty years, the Coalition has seen it as our responsibility to inform and educate the public and decision-makers about the need for and value of regulated child care. We have worked constructively with politicians from across the political spectrum, confident that once people had the facts, progress would follow. But you already know all about the value of quality child care. And, in the past you have used our research and arguments in your political campaigns and agendas. We are at a loss to understand why you have turned your back on children now.

In recent public statements, you indicated that you will not be swayed by arguments or opposition. But, in a democracy, to be silent is to be complicit. We will not abandon our commitment to work on behalf of children – a commitment you once respected and honoured.

On behalf of children and families in BC – we are seeking an explanation of your change of heart and priorities. We would be more than willing to host a meeting with you and the child care community to hear your response. We look forward to receiving your reply.

Sincerely,

Sharon Gregson  
Director, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

