

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

Working for a publicly-funded, non-profit child care system that is high quality, affordable, accessible and accountable.

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Clerk and Members of the Standing Committee on Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, Canada

September 4th, 2003

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) is pleased to submit this written brief to the Standing Committee on Finance for its pre-budget discussions.

Representatives of the CCCABC would be pleased to meet with you when hearings take place in Vancouver. Please contact Sharon Gregson, via e mail address info@cccabc.bc.ca.

Sincerely,
Sharon Gregson, Director
On Behalf of the Board of Directors
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

Submitted by
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
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Introduction

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) is a voluntary non-profit organization of parents, child care providers, interested citizens, and community organizations.

We support:

- The development of a comprehensive, accessible and affordable, publicly-funded, non-profit child care system in B.C. and across Canada.
- The right of every child and family to quality child care in their community.
- A range of inclusive child care choices including licensed, regulated family and centre-based care.
- Stable, adequate government funding to sustain quality child care programs.
- Child care worker's rights to wages and working conditions which reflect the level of training, responsibility and value of work performed.

We are pleased to submit this written response to the 2003 pre budget discussions of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance and have made note of the "important themes" stressed by the Committee as we "strive to maintain our recent momentum".

Specifically you ask:

- *what taxation, spending and other measures should be taken to ensure economic growth and job creation, balanced federal budgets...*
- *what taxation, spending and other measures should be taken to ensure progress in investing in, and caring for, all members of Canadian society*
- *what taxation, spending and other measures should be taken to ensure that urban, rural and remote communities are desirable places in which to live and work...*

The path is clear

The CCCABC, along with most other Canadians, believe that these important questions, vital to the success of our country, can be addressed through the implementation of a publicly funded child care system that meets the needs of all Canada's children (birth to twelve years of age) regardless of their ability, family income or employment status, language, culture or geographic location.

Canada remains one of the few highly developed industrialized countries in the world that does not provide a publicly-funded child care system for its youngest citizens. The research, the statistics and the daily experience of families across our country demonstrates the immediate need for a pan-Canadian child care system. The facts are so overwhelming that there can no longer be any doubt of the path our politicians must take.

We do know that:

- Over 1,000,000 mothers of pre-school children in Canada are in the paid labour force (Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2001 – Friendly, Beach and Turiano).
- The current economic contribution of these working mothers to the Canadian economy can be conservatively estimated at about \$27 billion per year. If we include reduction in investment and loss of productivity there would be a net loss of \$83 billion per year if all of these mothers left the paid labour force*.
- Good child care allows more parents to work. This makes it possible for parents to support their families and to contribute through taxes to the well-being of all Canadians*.
- Quality of child care makes a difference in virtually all childhood development outcomes regardless of the child's situation or background*.
- Parents care about their children but most families cannot afford to purchase child care of high enough quality to create all the benefits that society would like. Public funding improves quality and generates more public benefit*.

We know that child care facilitates economic growth and job creation. It is a critical component of the investment that should be made in the caring of Canadians and a comprehensive publicly funded child care system is necessary to ensure that urban, rural and remote communities are desirable places in which to live and work.

*Fact and Fantasy: Eight Myths About Early Childhood Education and Care, Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky, Economics University of Toronto

Recent strides and pitfalls

- September 2003 marks the third anniversary of the Early Childhood Development Agreement through which the federal government provides \$500 million per year to enable provincial and territorial governments to “improve and expand early childhood development programs and services, including child care”. This was an important opportunity for steps forward, but due to the lack of clear priorities in the Agreement, some provinces are funding improvements to aspects of regulated child care while others, like BC, have ignored the child care crisis in their province.
- In 2003 we welcomed the announcement of the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care that promised to “improve access to affordable, quality, provincially and territorially regulated early learning and child care programs”. However, we were bitterly disappointed with the level of funding allocated, particularly in the early years of the Framework. This new transfer payment made it even more apparent that the federal government must build into the funding a system of provincial/territorial responsibility, accountability and compliance for spending the money as intended. The necessity for these additional measures is evident from the BC example where new federal funding is being used to replace provincial cuts and an artificial distinction is being created between child development and child care.
- In November 2002 the National Liberal Caucus Social Policy Committee recommended: 1 billion in year one; \$2.2 billion in year two; \$3.2 billion in year three; and \$4.5 billion in year four, specifically to expand child care spaces and cover operating costs for children 3-6 years of age.

**Recommendations from
The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
to the
Standing Committee on Finance**

As Canada strives to provide all its citizens with a high quality of life we urge the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance to include in the upcoming federal budget:

1. The commitment of 1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to a publicly funded regulated child care system, as recommended by the European Union.
2. The requirement that as a condition of receiving federal child care funds, provinces/territories agree to use the funds specifically for publicly-funded, regulated, high quality, not-for-profit, accessible and affordable child care services that meet the diverse needs of the children and families in their jurisdictions.
3. The requirement that provinces/territories maintain or increase their child care spending and use federal funds to supplement rather than replace provincial/territorial child care funding.
4. The establishment of mechanisms to ensure provincial/territorial compliance with the terms of the Multilateral Agreements that include active community participation in monitoring progress and resolving disagreements and disputes.