

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

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

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All governments make policy and spending choices, this year is no different. Over the last three years many children and families in BC have paid the price for what the provincial Liberals call “difficult decisions”.

According to the Budget 2005 Consultation Paper, *“British Columbians live in the best province, in the best country in the world.”*

Far from the truth when it comes to child care!

While local and international research demonstrates that the quality of child care makes a difference in virtually all childhood development outcomes, regardless of a child’s situation or background, BC budgets have continued to ignore the child care crisis and the needs of the majority of BC’s children and families.

One example: Almost every Canadian province/territory invests less in child care than New Zealand.

- B.C., which has a similar number of newborn to 4-year-olds (280,000) as New Zealand (250,000), has allocated **\$48-million** in the current budget year for child-care operating expenses.
- New Zealand has allocated **\$451-million**. (*Globe and Mail, Sept 6, 2004*)

While the research affirms that the earlier we invest in our children, the longer we all reap the benefit, current spending per child in BC on all child care and development programs for the 0 to 5 age range is less than one-fifth what it is spent on public education starting at age 6. (*Making Early Childhood Development a Priority: Lessons from Vancouver, Dr. Clyde Hertzman*).

The lack of progress in building a pan-Canadian child care system to date speaks to Canada’s track record and our reality compared to other industrialized countries. The urgency of our current crisis is reinforced in the report *The Current State of Canadian Family Finances*. A record number of Canada’s parents are in the labour market - 82% of two adult families and 83% of single mothers. (*Vanier Institute of the Family, 2003*). However, only 12.1% of BC’s children have access to a licensed child care program.

Recommendations for 2005/06

Extensive research shows that to have healthy communities and a healthy economy, families must be able to access affordable, high quality, child care.

In 2005/06, we urge the BC Government to:

1. Implement a five year plan for a publicly funded child care system that entitles all BC children from birth to twelve years, access to a range of inclusive child care choices in licensed family and centre-based child care programs.
2. Establish a provincial framework with accountability measures that ensure:
 - affordable child care for families;
 - adequate operating funding to match the real costs of meeting the diverse needs of BC's children and families;
 - sufficient resources to enable inclusion of children with special needs; and
 - adequate and fair compensation for child care workers that reflect the level of training, responsibility and value of work performed.
3. Reinvest the \$42 million (*Public Funding for Child Care in BC, June 2004, YWCA Canada, L. Anderson*) in provincial funding that your government cut from prior child care spending, ensure adequate funding for inclusion in licensed child care programs through Supported Child Care and stabilize BC's provincial spending on child care.
4. Ensure government funding using a fair share of the federal funds in the Early Childhood Development Initiative to support child care as the cornerstone of BC's early childhood strategy and designate the federal funds from the Multilateral Framework to supplement, not replace, BC's own spending on child care.

Responding to the BC Government's Budget 2005 Consultation paper

In the Budget 2005 Consultation paper, one of the options identified is "reduce taxes further in specific areas".

While we believe there are ways to make the tax system fairer for working families and to spend our taxes more wisely, if tax cuts mean that we have insufficient revenue to build a child care system for all OR if tax cuts are used as a substitute for building a system – tax cuts are not part of a child care solution.

We do not support big tax cuts which result in service cuts and increased user fees which impact most on low and moderate income families.

We think it makes sense to fund a child care system through the tax system because:

- Families are at their lowest earning power when their children are young. When they most need child care, they are least likely to be able to afford it.
- Children's development is time sensitive and doesn't wait until their families can afford quality care.
- The benefits of investing in child care outweigh the costs and will lead to increased tax revenues down the road.

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