

# 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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## Response to the Federal Budget for 2003/04

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On February 18th, the federal government acknowledged it has an important role to play in developing the architecture and providing funding for a new publicly accountable intergovernmental child care agreement. However, after a decade of fixation on eliminating the deficit and reducing the debt, and in turn, neglecting the child care needs of children and families, Canada's children and families will still face a huge challenge.

Developing a comprehensive child care system that is accessible to all children - regardless of their family's income level, geographical location, or employment status - will require not only a new intergovernmental agreement, but also a significant spending commitment in each federal budget. We are very disappointed in the plan unveiled in Mr. Manley's budget. The total of \$900 million, and \$35 million for First Nations, over five years is completely inadequate to address the current and critical needs of all children and families across the country.

The Social Policy Committee of the National Liberal Caucus recommended \$1 billion in 2003/04; \$2.2 billion in 2004/05; \$3.2 billion in 2005/06; and \$4.5 billion in 2006/07 for a total of \$10.9 billion over the first four years to be allocated specifically for supporting the expansion and operations of regulated child care for children aged 0-6. This would have been an admirable start!

The inadequacy of this budget announcement becomes even clearer when one considers that the critical child care needs of school aged children are not even included in this plan.

To really make a difference in the lives of young children, the Finance Minister should have adopted the plan of his own National Liberal Caucus. And, taken the first significant steps in this federal budget with a significant commitment of money in the first two years. But, sadly, the 2003 child care budget spread over five years with only 25 million in year one and 75 million in year two, ignores the real child care needs of Canada's families today.

When it comes to child care, Chretien will leave a shameful legacy of many broken promises!

Sincerely,

Sharon Gregson

For the Board of Directors