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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Response to the Federal Budget 2004

The federal government promises more funds for child care, but how will the BC government spend it?

The 2004 federal budget emphasizes learning as the "cornerstone of Canada's economic and social progress" and as stated in the throne speech, makes additional spending promises for regulated child care. But the promised accelerated spending under the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care is far from what is really needed to build a pan-Canadian, publicly funded child care system.

In April 2003, the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care agreement promised federal spending of $75 million in 2004/05 and $150 million in 2005/06. Budget 2004 now promises to accelerate the spending for the next two years by $75 million more in each year. This means a promise to spend $150 million in 2004/05, and then $225 million in 2005/06.

For BC this could mean approximately $20 million for the fiscal year 2004/05, a total of around $81 for each BC child from birth to 5 years. Hardly enough to signal that Canada is finally prepared to catch up to other countries that have allocated significant funding over the years to make the child care needs of children and families a government priority.

The federal promises continue to ignore the fact that 90% of Canadians think Canada should have a nationally coordinated child care plan that ensures that all children have access to quality child care regardless of family income, disability, race or where they live. The spending promises also ignore other well documented facts:

- a record number of parents are now employed and Canada has gone from having the lowest proportion of working women among major industrialized countries to a record high participation rate of 71%;
- access to affordable, high quality, inclusive licensed child care is not a reality for most children in BC and the rest of Canada; and
- child care needs of school aged children are not included in the Multilateral Framework.

The federal government continues its promises to work in "co-operation with the provinces and territories", but BC's record in child care spending since the provincial Liberals came into power gets a failing grade. Even with more federal spending intended for child care, BC's reality reflects huge provincial funding cuts to child care across several ministries and a worsening child care crisis. Without more stringent conditions on how the provinces spend the new federal dollars, what can we expect in BC?

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