

BC Politicians challenged to meet or exceed Manitoba and Saskatchewan Child Care Agreements

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Today, the federal government signed bilateral agreements on child care with Manitoba and Saskatchewan but in BC families are still awaiting a good deal for our children. The child care deals are great news for children and families in two provinces and should spur British Columbia to negotiate an equal or better agreement for the children in this province.

"We challenge all those running in the provincial election to publicly commit to signing a similar child care agreement for BC's families if they are elected" says Susan Harney, Chairperson of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC.

"Parents are anxiously waiting for a breakthrough in building a publicly funded, universal and inclusive child care system for BC children and families. With over 70% of mothers in the paid workforce we need a child care system that truly supports families and children."

Today's agreements enshrine four key principles of a national child care system: quality, universally inclusive, accessibility and developmental programs. Both provinces have agreed to key building blocks that families and advocates have been seeking. These provinces will:

- Invest in regulated community-based, non-profit child care services
- Use federal funds to complement existing provincial investments
- Consult with communities to develop Action Plans with measurable targets
- Be publicly accountable for reporting out on their progress

British Columbia's families need an equal agreement to that in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Ontario is also poised to sign on to federal child care funding thereby providing momentum and setting the stage for BC to participate in this historic agreement.

The agreement underscores the urgent need for passage of the child care provisions in the federal budget so that child care funding can start to flow across the country. But money alone isn't enough.

"Given our experience in BC over the past four years, we are pleased to see accountability for spending child care dollars included in today's agreements and expect no less for BC. This is critical to ensuring that BC moves from a patchwork approach to the development of a real child care system, and we will keep pushing for concrete accountability measures in all agreements and at the federal level," says Harney.