

BC Families not fooled by Harper's Child Care Double Speak

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"Families and child care providers are not fooled by Stephen Harper's claim that child care is one of his government's top 5 priorities," says Susan Harney, Chair of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC. "The facts are that his government's real priority is to **cut** child care."

Since taking office, the federal government has not budged on its election 'promise' to cancel federal-provincial agreements on child care. Under these Agreements, BC was to receive \$633 million for child care over a 5 year period. If the federal government proceeds with its plan to cancel this Agreement in 2007, BC will lose \$455 million in dedicated child care funds.

"Federal child care funds were finally starting to replace some of the devastating cuts that BC made to its own child care funding," says Sharon Gregson, parent of 4. "Unless the province is prepared to pick up the tab, BC families can expect child care fees to go up, subsidies to go down and wait lists to grow. How anyone can spin this as a federal priority on child care is beyond me?" Gregson adds.

Harper claims that his government's proposed taxable family allowance of \$100 a month for every child under the age of 6 is a 'child care' program. But, Stephanie Seaman, a Vancouver front line child care workers says "Nothing could be further from the truth. After taxes, families with both parents in the paid labour force will get very little - certainly not anywhere near enough to cover the cost of quality child care. And, the taxable allowance does nothing to create affordable, quality spaces - even though that's what most families need and want."

A Stats Can Report released on April 5 confirms Seaman's understanding of Canadian families' reality. Over an 8-year period, there was a 12% growth in the number of children under 6 in child care. Over half of all children under the age of 6 participated in child care in 2002/03.

"The fact is that 86% of Canadian mothers are back in the labour force within a year of giving birth. Their children are in some form of non-parental care and the quality of that care matters. It's time for Mr. Harper to stop pretending that he is doing anything to help most families meet their child care needs." Harney concludes.