

The Federal Budget – What Can We Expect in BC?

On March 23, 2004 the federal Finance Minister presented the budget for 2004/05. This budget included an increase in the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care cash transfers (Canada Social Transfer) for this fiscal year and next.

In 2004-2005, the new allocation across Canada is \$150 million (an increase from \$75 million) and in 2005-2006, it's a total of \$225 million (an increase from \$150 million). The promises remained the same for the last two years of this agreement i.e. \$300 million in years 2006 – 2007 and \$350 million in 2007-2008.

Under the Multilateral Framework Agreement, this means the federal government will provide the following to the BC government:

\$ 3.3 million in 2003-04

\$19.6 million in 2004-05

\$29.4 million in 2005-06

\$39.2 million in 2006-07

\$45.7 million in 2007-08

How much money is this really?

At the end of the five-year 'ramp up', the federal government will be spending about as much for child care as it did in 1996. Hardly enough federal leadership and commitment to respond to the current pan-Canadian child care crisis!

If you take a look at the number of children aged birth to five years in BC (in 2001), and the total money allocated in this Agreement to BC, you will see that even if the BC government chose to spend all of this federal money on child care, as intended in the Agreement, it will only provide around:

\$ 80 per child in 2004-2005; \$118 per child in 2005-2006; \$158 per child in 2006-2007; and \$184 per child in 2007-2008.

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?

See the CCCABC response to the federal budget at http://action.web.ca/home/cccabbc/alerts.shtml?sh_itm=36a1f1b401e6b97290c538f0fe0f62d8&AA_EX_Session=0c31aa82e1498ff702d735dd59d9557e

BC Parent Voices

A pan-Canadian effort

Parent Voices is all about working with parents to speak out about the publicly funded child care services families need in our communities. Parent Voices began over two years ago as a project sponsored by the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC). It has connected parents who are interested in child care advocacy and it has provided numerous opportunities for parents to become involved in child care advocacy.

BC Parent Voices and CCCABC

Over the last two years, we have worked with provincial/territorial child care advocacy organizations like the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, to build a strong BC Parent Voices Network. Through the collective efforts of BC parents and child care advocates, the BC Parent Voices Network has initiated several campaigns and joined with other advocates to participate in provincial and pan-Canadian child care advocacy efforts.

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C., is committed to involving BC parents in local, provincial and pan-Canadian child care advocacy efforts and has made support for BC Parent voices a priority in 2004.

BC Parent Voices recognizes child care month!

Our message is:

Child care: BC's children deserve the best!

You can add your voices by:

- putting up our BC Parent Voices Child Care Month sign (e.g., on your window at home; on the parents' bulletin board in the child care facility; at parent's work places and community gathering spots)
- sending a mother's day message to Premier Gordon Campbell – **Child care: Our children deserve the best. BC can afford to give our children the best start!**

Share this information with others and encourage them to add their voices too!

For further information, be sure your name is on the BC Parent Voices e-mail list (just e-mail us at info@parentvoices.ca and check out www.cccabc.bc.ca for BC Parent Voices child care month info).

Child Care Month Greetings from the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC) joins with the Coalition in applauding the commitment of families and caregivers across BC to promoting and providing quality child care. Your advocacy efforts have helped to put child care 'on the map' at a pan-Canadian level. However, we share your deep concern that the small steps our federal government has taken to establish the framework and funding for a pan-Canadian child care plan have not resulted in even small improvements to child care in BC.

As outlined in our recent news release on the federal budget (see "Baby Steps won't take us Far" on our web site at www.childcareadvocacy.ca), the CCAAC continues to advocate for mechanisms which ensure that federal child care funds are spent for their intended purpose, and spent well to improve child care quality and accessibility.

Further, in a pre-budget letter to Mr. Martin, the CCAAC asked the Prime Minister to ensure that the Liberal Party platform for the upcoming election commit to "long-term planning that sets out goals and objectives, targets and timetables, assessment and monitoring for early learning and child care (ELCC). Commitment of long-term, stable, well-directed public funding must be part of this policy process." Specifically, the CCAAC is calling for:

- A commitment to a long-term (10 or 15 year) goal of universal ELCC in every region of Canada.
- A commitment that the Government of Canada will lead in collaborative engagement with provinces/territories so as to make public – within one year of taking office - a plan for beginning to put this in place.
- Specific ELCC objectives for a first-term mandate.
- Financial commitments sufficient to ensure that these objectives can be met.

Our association's Executive Director, Maryann Bird said that, "We intend to make universal child care a key issue in the upcoming federal election. We urge Mr. Martin to do the same."

The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada would also like to thank you for supporting our advocacy work at the pan-Canadian level. The response to our Coalition/CCAAC joint membership pilot project to date has been very positive, and we look forward to continuing to welcome new members to the CCAAC as Coalition memberships are renewed throughout the year.

With a federal election expected shortly, a growing number of Canadians from coast to coast to coast are calling for a federal strategy to give all children access to affordable, comprehensive, high quality and non-profit child care services.

Lynell Anderson
BC Director, Child Care Advocacy
Association of Canada

The Elections Are Coming Let's be sure everyone is registered to vote

By the time you receive this Newsletter, we may well be into a federal election. If not, one will be coming soon and we know that the next provincial election will be held on **May 17, 2005**.

If we want to elect governments that are committed to publicly funded child care, we need to mobilize our constituency to get out and vote! We need to show politicians that we are a political force to contend with.

Yet, too often the people who are directly affected by child care policy are too busy, too cynical, too apathetic or too overwhelmed to cast their vote. This leaves the voting process wide open to those who don't share our values.

It's time to make sure that every person who cares or should care about progressive child care policies is **registered to vote both federally and provincially**.

As the first step in our Election Strategy, the Coalition is launching a '**child care voter registration drive**'. We are asking our members to proactively support and encourage co-workers, families and others to get on the voters' lists.

There are lots of creative ways to be part of this drive:

- ✓ Talk about the importance of being on the voters' list at parent meetings and with staff
- ✓ Set up a parent display about getting on the voters' list
- ✓ Put voter registration information in your program Newsletter
- ✓ Have a 'Lets Vote' party where everyone completes the forms together
- ✓ Take the voter registration drive to other groups in your community.

Here is some information about getting on the voters' lists:

Provincial Voter Registration (From Elections BC Website www.elections.bc.ca/)
Elections BC - Toll Free: 1-800-661-8683 / TTY 1-888-456-5448

To vote in a BC electoral district for a provincial election, an individual must:

- be a Canadian citizen;
- be 18 years of age or older on General Voting Day for the election;
- be a resident of the electoral district;
- have been a resident of BC for at least 6 months immediately preceding General Voting Day;
- be registered as a voter for the electoral district, or register in conjunction with voting; and
- not be disqualified from voting in the election.

To register as a BC voter, a qualified individual must complete an “Application for Registration” as a Provincial Voter. To register as a new voter, you can

- Visit your local [Government Agent](#) office; or
- Visit the Elections BC [Victoria office](#); or
- Visit <https://vov.com/home/electionsbc/reg.sform.html> to update your registration. Once you have fully completed and signed your application form, forward it to Elections BC by:
 - **Mail:** Elections BC, PO Box 9275 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9J6
 - **Fax:** 250-387-3578 **Scan and mail:** electionsbc@gems3.gov.bc.ca

(Include a phone number on the Form so that Elections BC can contact you)

Voters who change their name or address must notify Elections BC to have their registration updated.

Federal Voter Registration (From Elections Canada website www.elections.ca/)
Elections Canada - Toll Free: 1 800 463-6868/TTY 1 800 361-8935

To be eligible to vote in federal elections and referendums you must be a Canadian citizen, who will be 18 or older on polling day.

The federal government maintains a **National Register of Electors** of Canadians who are qualified to vote. This Register is used to produce a voters' list when an election is called.

The Register is updated regularly using sources such as motor vehicles registrars, vital statistics and permanent provincial voters' lists.

To find out if you are on the National Register of Electors, call Elections Canada at 1 800 463-6868. (TTY 1 800 361-8935)

If you are **not** on the National Register, you will be able to register with your local Returning Officer once the election has been called.

Refocus on Supported Child Care - An Update

In September 2003, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC responded with alarm to the initial Discussion Paper outlining the proposed changes to the Supported Child Care (SCC) program. Child care was virtually ignored in the Discussion Paper despite the fact that it was always and continues to be the cornerstone of Supported Child Care.

The Coalition responded again when the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) released a draft Supported Child Development Program (SCDP) Policies and Procedures Manual in January 2004. As a clear result of the input from the community, this document made a fundamental shift to include a strong focus on child care. Despite the shift, the Manual still reflected a disconnect between child care and the key principle of child development.

The Coalition's response expressed deep concern about other significant aspects of the refocus. The Manual set out a series of ambitious expectations above and beyond the mandate of the current SCC program without any additional resources. This enhanced mandate included: addressing barriers to access, supporting capacity building in the Aboriginal Community, expanding supports to a wider range of community settings, serving children who are at risk of having a developmental delay and implementing an Alternate Funding Option where parents receive the funding to hire extra staffing support.

Other concerns addressed in the Coalition's Response related to the devastating impacts of reductions and restrictions to both the basic provincial Child Care Subsidy and the Special Needs Supplement and the loss of child care spaces due to recent government policies.

In April 2004, MCFD released a new working draft SCDP Policy and Procedures Manual. This draft incorporates some of the community feedback but fails to address how SCC can be expected to deliver the vastly expanded mandate within current funding levels. With the change of Minister in MCFD, timelines for implementation of the refocused plan have slowed down. The devolution of SCC programs from government to community agencies is expected to take five months once contract guidelines and the working draft is signed off by senior government. Two key policy areas, the Alternate Funding Option and the expansion of the mandate into a broader range of community settings have been postponed until January 2005.

The introduction of the new Minister, Christie Clark, gives the community a fresh opportunity to provide input to the Refocus. As child care advocates, we need to continue to share our issues, concerns and solutions and to promote our vision of "a publicly funded, affordable, high quality, inclusive, comprehensive child care system that meets the needs of all BC children, including those with disabilities" (from the Coalition's response to the SCDP Policies and Procedures Manual).

Congratulations to Sheila Davidson on her Appointment as Vancouver's Child and Youth Advocate

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC joins co-workers, families, friends and admirers in congratulating Sheila Davidson on her appointment to the City of Vancouver's reinstated Child and Youth Advocate position.

For over two decades, Sheila has been a leader in BC's child care community. She has consistently demonstrated a unique ability to combine her professional commitment to the delivery of exceptionally high quality care with her personal commitment to social justice and advocacy on behalf of children and families. For Sheila there is no separation between the two. Sheila has willingly taken on a wide range of leadership roles –some very public and high profile, others behind the scenes. In each case she has built allies for the child care community and has earned the lasting respect of the people she works with. While some might not always agree with Sheila, no one has or can question her passion or values.

The Coalition also wants to acknowledge and thank Simon Fraser University and the Board and Staff of SFU Childcare Society for supporting the critical advocacy work that Sheila has done. Under Sheila's leadership, SFU continues to be one of the exemplary child care services in Canada. It would be easy to rest on these laurels, but SFU Childcare Society understands that excellence brings with it a responsibility to ensure that all children and families have access to the same high quality care that is found here. The child care advocacy community applauds this commitment and looks forward to many more years of cooperative relationships with SFU Childcare Society in the future.

Sheila, you make the child care community proud. Your personal and professional integrity, your courage, your humour, your frankness and your tenacity and grace have set the standard for advocates across the province. We know that you will bring these qualities and skills to your new job – a job that is more important now than ever before. We also know that this is not good-bye. No matter where you are, we know that you will be an advocate for child care and will work to ensure that child care is a cornerstone of communities that work for children, youth and families.

We will be there with you every step of the way!

With love and respect,

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

REGIONAL REPORT

Child Care in the West Kootenays

In response to “What’s happening with Child Care in the Kootenays?” I put out the question to various contacts in our Region. “What changes have there been to child care and related programs since the 2001 provincial election?” brought forth a number of responses that will not surprise anyone.

Child Care Centres have closed in most communities, downsizing as a result of many issues but primarily the cuts to subsidies. Parents can no longer afford licensed care and are looking for more inexpensive unlicensed options.

The biggest change was to enrollment in After School and Infant Toddler Programs. After school with the loss of the FAP grant, and Infant Toddler with the rising costs of care and the decreasing support from government.

Unionized agencies and employees took the hardest hits in the area. Employees took cuts to wages and benefits and a number of centres had to close. The saddest closure was Chestnut Hollow in Nelson. This was a facility that had been providing services for over 30 years to the children and families in the Nelson area. When the government cut the support to fund the wages and benefits negotiated under the Munroe agreement, this Society was faced with closing the centre. The same Society also closed two other programs and struggled to keep three others open, with significant reductions in wages and benefits. Subsequently, one of the centres closed permanently in February of this year due to inadequate enrollment as parents could not afford increased parent fees.

The significant reductions in wages and benefits have caused difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified staff in the Region. The hardest to recruit are casuals who work for 10 to 12 dollars per hour. Most are unqualified, as the qualified staff in the area are working or leave for greener pastures. This was not the case when employees were being paid at rates that were commensurate to the work being done.

One of the harshest cuts was the closing of the Early Childhood Care and Education program at Selkirk College that has been in existence since 1977. The “last supper” that was recently held for practicum supervisors in the Region was a sad affair.

Other issues in the Region include loss of access to subsidy for low income families to access preschool programs, loss of the One Stop Access funding causing reduced services to parents, caregivers and communities and a decrease in licensed family child care. The list goes on but there is nothing different here than in any other parts of the province.

With one year left in this government’s mandate we now learn that Child Care will be moving to the Ministry of Children and Families Development under the direction of Minister Clark. Could this actually mean that the Provincial Liberals will start to reinstate funding to this field? Will subsidies be brought back to their pre-2001 levels or will a publicly accessible universal system once again start to be implemented?

The cynicism in me wonders what goodies will start to be trotted out as we approach the next election and how will children and families in the province benefit? However, the cautiously optimistic part of me hopes that Minister Clark, now that she is one, is truly respectful of the trials and tribulations that working parents face, and that our children and grandchildren deserve accessible, affordable care with well trained, appropriately compensated professionals in quality licensed facilities.

By:
Katrine Conroy

REGIONAL ACTIVIST NETWORK - UPDATE

Over the last few months the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC has been privileged to work more closely with thirteen child care activists from across the province. Through increased electronic communications, conference calls, regional reports in our Newsletters and some opportunities to bring people together – we have taken some important steps to get and stay connected so that we can truly speak with one voice across the province.

Over the past several months the Regional Network has discussed:

- ∞Provincial government changes to Supported Child Care
- ∞Updates on how the provincial government has been misusing new federal dollars
- ∞Responses to Throne Speeches and Budgets
- ∞Impacts of cuts to low-income subsidies
- ∞Preschools in Elementary Schools
- ∞Success By Six
- ∞Early Childhood Development and Child Care
- ∞Election Tactics and Strategies

The participation of Regional Activists from Campbell River, Prince George, Terrace, Nelson, Castlegar, Creston, Trail, Revelstoke, Kamloops, Duncan, Courtenay and Sechelt has added an important and valuable dimension to CCCABC activities. We very much appreciate all the energy and wisdom shared by these activists.

Here is Why You Should Renew Your Membership Now...

We are very proud to announce to our members that we can now offer a wonderful opportunity to not only stay informed about and support provincial child care advocacy – BUT – now when you take out a membership with the Coalition of Child care Advocates of BC – you also become a member of the Child Care Advocacy Association of CANADA.

As we lead into an expected federal election and a provincial election exactly one year away – it is vital that the provincial and pan-Canadian child care organizations that speak for women, children and families have a strong voice.

To do that we need your support.

Even if your provincial membership has not quite expired please consider renewing in order to activate your federal membership.

You will find a renewal form in the back of this newsletter or visit our website at www.cccabc.bc.ca. Please encourage your workplace, your local, your family, friends and co-workers to join us.

As always – we thank you so very much for your support and we look forward to making child care a major election issue.

CHILD CARE

**BC's children
deserve
the best!**

BC Parent Voices

