

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

September 2002

As you can see by a quick scan of our Newsletter, the women who sit on the CCCABC Board have been more than busy during the summer months. In times when everything seems to be turning sour, I continue through the years to be inspired by these women who despite busy schedules, huge and varied commitments and full work loads, relentlessly continue to find a hundred different ways to move our child care agenda forward. Whether it be in the federal finance submission, the report to SUFA, the continuous letter writing and lobbying to all levels of government, they remain steadfast in their commitment to a publicly funded, affordable, child care system. They do it because it is the right thing to do, because children don't have a strong voice of their own, and because daily we hear of the horrors resulting from this government's economic and social policies. What is even more inspiring, is knowing that there are women and men throughout every community in BC working just as hard, just as determined because it is just.

This August, supported through funding from Status of Women BC/Yukon, CCCABC was able to invite advocates from the child care field to work and talk with advocates from other social justice organizations in a Friday night, Saturday (all day) working session. A synopsis of that weekend is included in this newsletter but I'm not sure anyone could capture the inspiration, the thought provoking debate and the renewed energy that many of us experienced. One result of the Symposium was to help shape the work of the CCCABC Board /membership for the coming years, a recommitment to our values and goals. For me, it helped build a stronger than ever determination to fight on... and to recognize how important it is for child care to work together with other organizations as we strive for social justice.

Last week I attended a meeting with Ministers Reid and Stephens as part of a child care delegation and it seemed to me that the Ministers still did not understand the full impact, across every community in BC, of cuts to subsidy, FAP, etc. So, even more now I think we need to keep up the pressure by submitting "our stories" our real life examples of the impact these cuts have had. Document what has happened to school age spaces in your program and community since the cuts to FAP. What have been the impacts of cuts to subsidies to families in your neighbourhoods? Send the stories to both Ministers and copy to Minister Coell, Minister Hoag and the Premier. If they say that they haven't heard, let's make sure that they do, one more time, and keep copies of all those that we send so that we'll have proof.

Currently, the Board is preparing a new three-year funding proposal to Status of Women BC/Yukon for further funding to support our new and on going challenges. Hopefully, our organization will be successful in our submission and we can continue our work with full participation. But with or without funding, our mandate is clear. We will continue to fight for what is right. We will continue to speak out against what is wrong. We will continue.....

Susan Harney
Chairperson

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CHILD CARE OPERATING FUNDING PROGRAM

We have heard from a number of our members that there is increased anxiety about the new Child Care Grant program that is slated to begin April 2003. While bits and pieces of information have been circulating around the community there has been no formal communication from the Branch that we are aware of.

Here are some questions that seem critical to ask/be aware of concerning the new grant:

1. What accountability measures will be in place? How will our field be able to assure British Columbians that tax dollars are being spent to enhance quality child care?
2. How will the new funding program address the issue of affordability for parents?
3. How will the new funding program ensure adequate staff wages and benefits?
4. How large is the new “funding pot”? If more programs will be able to access dollars does this mean a reduction of funding for current programs or an increase in the overall funding dollars available?
5. Will payments be received in a timely fashion? Knowing that many programs depend on the current CCP, etc. dollars will the new grant be accessible to programs so that they can meet their financial obligations each month?

These are just a few questions that need immediate answers from the Ministry. We encourage you to write to Minister Stephens to express any concerns that you may have regarding the new grant program. Send copies of your letters or emails to the Premier. We need to voice our concerns. This government ran on a platform of transparent accountability. Let's hold them to it!

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Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Provincial Strategy Session – Final Report
September 2002

Executive Summary

On August 16 and 17, 2002 the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC hosted a provincial strategy session. The session involved over 40 participants from communities across BC and brought together child care advocates and activists from women's, labour, students' and social policy organizations – all of whom share a commitment to a publicly funded child care system that entitles all children access to quality child care.

The purpose of the provincial session was to develop strategies for keeping our vision for child care alive and well in the current climate.

On Friday evening, three panelists from key allied constituencies. David Chudnovsky, Past President of the BC Teachers' Federation, Joyce Jones of the Senior's Network BC and Jamie Kass, the Child Care Coordinator for the Canadian Union of Postal Workers shared their views on strategies for advancing a social justice agenda.

On Saturday, discussions were organized around five 'tensions' that advocates are experiencing in our efforts to protect the progress we have achieved and keep our vision for child care alive and well in the current climate:

1. Short-term Campaigns/Long-term Vision
2. Saving Services/Protecting Advances
3. Quality of Child Care Services/Affordability of Child Care Services
4. Influencing Government/Resisting Government
5. Child Care Focus/Broader Social Justice Agenda

The following key messages emerged from across the group discussions:

1. As a whole, the child care movement needs to pursue **a wide range of diverse strategies and tactics** which cover the full spectrum of approaches discussed within each of the 'tensions'.
2. The diversity of tactics that are part of our movement's strategy to advance child care within the current public policy environment should be **established through dialogue** within and beyond the child care community.
3. To achieve **'unity in diversity'**, the child care community should develop an explicit agreement on 'who' is in the best position to undertake specific roles and responsibilities. This will **foster respect** for the legitimacy of diverse tactics and will **enhance accountability** across the community.

4. Within this diverse range of strategies and tactics, the **particular roles and responsibilities of the Coalition** include:

- ✓ Holding onto and advancing our **long-term vision** for child care.
- ✓ Getting our **message out** as broadly as possible.
- ✓ Drawing out the broad **public policy implications** of government's child care directions rather than focusing on particular responses that communities may have to immediate and specific problems.
- ✓ Engaging, as appropriate, in a full range of tactics, with a particular emphasis on the **advocacy** → **activist** → **resistance** end of the strategic continuum.
- ✓ Recognizing that our **short-term successes** may only achieve a 'pause' or 'slow down' in the dismantling of child care services in BC.
- ✓ Participating actively with and in the **broader social justice movement** to broaden support for our child care agenda and lend our support to other related causes and issues.

Two additional important issues were identified that require further discussion:

1. The role of **public protest** in child care advocacy

The Coalition regularly hears from some members about the need for province wide child care actions – for example 'A Day Without Child Care'. While there is consensus that child care advocates should participate in public protests as part of the broader social justice movement, there is less clarity about the readiness and willingness of communities to undertake child care specific public protest. Given our limited resources and the potential negative impact of unsuccessful mobilizations, the advisability and feasibility of organizing public action needs further consideration.

2. Our role in **electoral politics**.

There is consensus that, at a minimum, the Coalition should raise child care in federal, provincial and municipal elections; should seek party and candidate commitments to our child care agenda and should provide the public with an analysis of different child care policies. However, there is a range of views on what else, if anything, we might do. Some feel strongly that we must remain strictly non-partisan; others suggest that we have a responsibility to publicly endorse those who support our platform while others foresee a more active role in building new programmatic electoral coalitions. This discussion needs to continue as the electoral landscape in BC unfolds.

The Coalition is committed to moving forward on the directions set at the Strategy Session. Our thanks to Status of Women Canada – BC/Yukon Division for their support and to all of the participants for their wisdom, time and energy.

Victim of Subsidy Cutbacks

I was a victim of the Liberal party child care subsidy cutbacks. I have done everything I can think of...writing letters to MP's and the Premier, media forums etc. to no avail. The fact is we are not making it. I now have to pay approximately \$600.00 per month and that is with a family member generously helping me 4 days a month. I am a single parent who has always taken pride in the fact that I have been steadily employed and self sufficient, never relying on government handouts. The child care subsidy is not a handout. It is paid, as a wage to hard working child care providers who ensure the well being of our children while we earn money to pay our taxes.

(A \$1 billion upgrade for the Sea to Sky highway for a 10 day event...I don't think so)

Before the cutbacks we just squeaked by but now I am depending on credit cards to buy groceries and clothing and the debt just gets deeper and deeper. The letters I've written have fallen on deaf ears spouting quotes about how "we want you to reach your full potential". I've worked full time for 20 years how much more full potential do they want me to get?

Thanks for reading.

N. Gerein
Gibsons, BC

Check out www.cccabc.bc.ca for the Provincial and Federal Pre-Budget Finance Committee submissions from the Coalition, CCAAC, First Call, Parent Voices and PFCC.

Notice of the Annual General Meeting of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

Please mark this date on your calendar...

**January 21st, 2003 @ 7pm
Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
Vancouver, BC**

Look forward to an exciting speaker with the latest advocacy updates

Excerpt from:

End Legislated Poverty

After the Cuts: Annual Savings Projections for MHR

By Lesley Moore
August 28, 2002

How have low income people been impacted by the cuts to welfare and child care subsidy? And who is bearing the brunt of these cuts? Anti-poverty groups have been asking these questions for months. With recent data from the Ministry of Human Resources it now appears that the government stands to save almost \$144 million from the first round of cuts. Savings are due to:

1. Implementation of the three week wait policy to apply for welfare
2. Lowering of the child care subsidy income threshold
3. Eliminating the flat rate earnings exemption and maintenance exemption, and
4. Reducing shelter and support allowances for those on welfare

More Employable Single Parents

In April 2002, there were 8,950 more single parent families who were expected to work. This is because parents whose youngest child is age 3 or over were re-categorized as employable. Previously these parents were “temporarily excused” from job seeking and participating in mandatory training until their youngest child was age 7. The government will save some money by sending single parents with young children into the workforce, however, the cost of providing child care subsidy to low income families may offset some of these savings. At this time there is no information available that projects the costs and savings for this group of recipients.

Changes to Child Care Subsidy

So far, about 10,500 families in BC have been negatively impacted by the \$285 reduction in the allowable income threshold which took effect in April 2002. The amount of child care subsidy available to families is determined by a family’s income and now incomes must be lower in order to qualify. The projected government savings as a result of changes to the child care subsidy program is estimated to be about \$26 million per year according to the Ministry of Human Resources.

In particular, after changes to the income test in April 2002:

- **Approximately 9,000 families now receive less child care subsidy**
- **Another 1,500 families no longer receive any child care subsidy at all**

Statistics were obtained through the Ministry of Human Resources, Policy and Research Division

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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The Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA)

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates has prepared this bulletin and attached “backgrounder” to encourage and support all child care advocates to speak up for child care and once again, make it a priority on the federal agenda.

There are lots of ways to do this, but right now we are asking you to respond to the federal government’s review of the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA).

“What’s SUFA got to do with child care?” SUFA is an agreement between the federal, provincial and territorial governments (except Quebec) about how they will cooperate on new social programs in Canada – including social programs for children.

And, the **Early Childhood Development (ECD) Agreement** is the first new social program in Canada signed under the SUFA framework.

After two years of the Early Childhood Development Agreement, the child care community is in the best position to send the federal government a loud and clear message that **SUFA and the resulting ECD Agreement are NOT meeting the needs of children and families across Canada.**

The federal government is conducting its review of SUFA through an on-line consultation. Detail information about SUFA, the review process and instructions for making submissions are available at www.sufa-review.ca **The deadline for submissions is October 18, 2002, so we ask you to act today!**

The attached **“Backgrounder”** is designed to help you respond to the SUFA review. It includes:

- ✓ A brief description of SUFA, and the promises it makes
- ✓ A brief description of the ECD Agreement, and the promises it makes
- ✓ Examples of how the ECD reality demonstrates that, once again, the promises are being broken
- ✓ Key messages to send the federal government

We hope you use this information to help us tell the federal government that if the SUFA ‘promises’ of equality and fairness for all are going to be realized – they need to show leadership, accept responsibility and provide adequate funds.

Backgrounder

SUFA Consultation - What does it Mean for Child Care?

The Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA)

On February 4, 1999 the Prime Minister and Premiers, with the exception of Quebec¹, signed the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA). This agreement laid the framework for intergovernmental cooperation in areas such as health, children's services, post secondary education, training, social services, social assistance and aboriginal services.

Key SUFA Principles

"Canada's social union should reflect ...fundamental values of Canadians –equality, respect for diversity, fairness, individual dignity and responsibility, and mutual aid and our responsibilities to each other."

Some of the promises of the Social Union Framework Agreement

"All Canadians are equal:

- *Treat all Canadians with fairness and equity*
- *Promote equality of opportunity for all Canadians*

Meeting the needs of Canadians:

- *Ensure access for all Canadians, wherever they live or move in Canada, to essential social programs and services of reasonably comparable quality*
- *Provide appropriate assistance to those in need*
- *Promote the full and active participation of all Canadians in Canada's social and economic life*
- *Work in partnership with individuals, families, communities, voluntary organizations, business and labour, and ensure appropriate opportunities for Canadians to have meaningful input into social policies and programs*

Sustaining social programs and services:

- *Ensure adequate, affordable, stable and sustaining funding for social programs"*

Implementation of the Agreement is coordinated by a cabinet minister from each province/territory and by the federal Ministers of Human Resources Development and of Health (B.C.'s representative is Hon. Murray Coell, Minister of Human Resources).

¹ Quebec did not sign this agreement because it believes that the Agreement "infringes on its constitutional jurisdiction on social matters" but it did receive the federal funds.

Early Childhood Development Agreement – the first new social program under the SUFA

In September, 2000, the federal-provincial/territorial governments announced the signing of the **Early Childhood Development Agreement** and the **Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI)**. The federal government negotiated an early childhood policy framework to include four key areas: healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy; parenting and family supports; early childhood development, learning and care; and community supports. Each provincial/territorial government could determine what key areas of the ECDI they wanted to implement and how the federal funds would be spent.

The ECDI promises:

- Federal-provincial/territorial governments agreed to work together to improve and expand early childhood programs and services across the country.
- With \$2.2 billion federal dollars over five years, the programs and services were to be built on what already existed, and were to become more coordinated and widely available.
- Provincial/territorial governments were to be accountable and report on new activities and expenditures, and on the well-being of young children.

The ECD reality:

The implementation of the ECDI fell short of meeting its objectives, SUFA principles, and meeting the needs of children and families.

- There is no consistent federal-provincial/territorial agreement regarding the components, structures, targets or timelines for what an early childhood system will ensure for all children and their families.
- The provincial/territorial governments are not required to spend any of the ECDI funds on supporting and improving regulated child care. While the research affirms that child care must be the cornerstone of an early childhood system, not all provinces are using these funds for child care. The majority of Canadian families continue to face a patchwork of programs/services depending upon their needs, where they live, and their socio economic status.
- Poverty is a major problem in our country with approximately 1 out of every 5 children living below the poverty line and access to high quality child care would be a key component of an effective anti-poverty strategy.
- While at least 65% of all children have mothers who are in the paid labour force, the current cost of regulated child care is unaffordable for the majority of families. Spaces are limited and only 10% of all children have access to regulated child care. The very children who could most benefit from access to enriched experiences are least likely to receive them.
- The federal ECDI funds are inadequate and there is no commitment to sustain the funding after the five years.
- The reporting requirements are vague and the existing provincial/territorial reports do not ensure public accountability.

Our Key Messages to the Federal Government

You can participate in the on-line consultation at

www.sufa-review.ca

Deadline for submissions is October 18, 2002.

The Social Union Framework and the Early Childhood Development Agreement are not meeting the child care needs of Canada's children and families. Tell the federal government that it's time to:

make a substantial investment and commit to a 5 year action plan to develop a comprehensive child care system with a new expenditure of at least \$2 billion in year one, and a further \$500 million in each of the following four years, for a total of \$4 billion annually by 2008/09.

develop targets and timelines and require all provinces/territories to use the designated federal funds for building a comprehensive child care system that entitles all children access to high quality, affordable, regulated child care in their communities.

require that the provincial/territorial governments work with the municipalities and community organizations to plan and implement regionally responsive child care services.

implement a process by which the provinces/territories are required to be publicly accountable, to provide detailed progress reports, and to ensure opportunities for community review and input.

Resources:

SUFA website www.sufa-review.ca

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada Spring 2002 Bulletin, Not Nearly Enough

More than the sum of the parts: An early childhood development system for Canada, Briefing Notes, Child Care Resource and Research Unit

Early Childhood Development Agreement, Government of Canada brochure

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C. www.cccabc.bc.ca

September, 2002

Municipal Elections

**VOTE
CHILD
CARE**

In **November, 2002** Municipal elections will be held across B.C. We know that communities that advocate for child care can motivate civic politicians to take an interest and provide leadership.

What can child care advocates do ?

- Talk about the critical role that the municipality and school districts must play in working with the community, provincial and federal governments to develop a publicly funded, comprehensive, accessible, regulated, high quality child care system that is accountable for all public funds.
- “Think child care” and share your ideas about what’s working and what’s not. Write letters to the local newspapers. Talk about it with co workers, neighbours, family and friends.
- Collaborate with others in your community to organize an ‘all candidates’ meeting focusing on issues that impact on children.
- Attend ‘all candidates’ meetings and ask questions and/or individually contact your local politicians and ask them about their opinions.
- Be sure you participate in the upcoming elections and encourage others too.
Vote child care!

A Place to Start ASK THESE QUESTIONS.....

1. What are the child care issues in our community?
2. If elected, what leadership would you provide to ensure that the school district and municipal council put child care on the agenda?
3. What role do you see the municipal governments playing in the development of child care policy and services in our community?
4. In what ways could local funding support child care?
5. What child care messages do you think our school district and municipality could send to the provincial government?
6. If elected, what leadership would you provide in working with the provincial and federal governments to ensure that child care is the cornerstone of a comprehensive set of early childhood services for all children and their families?

Report from the North By Coco Schau

In the north-west and central northern areas of the province, families have been hard hit by job losses, cuts to services, school closures, and college cuts.

At a preschool in Terrace where about 50% of the families were subsidized last year, enrollment is down. Another preschool closed its doors in June because more than half the parents were no longer eligible for subsidy. Elimination of the social criteria for child care subsidy means that increasing numbers of parents with preschool children are unable to access child care at a time when stresses on families are exceptionally high due to low employment rates and restructuring of human service delivery. At the same time, cuts to other parental supports are hitting hard. All provincially funded parenting programs in Terrace were cut this summer and a parent-child drop-in program contract ends next month.

We know that families involved with the Ministry used to be able to access child care to enrich their children's lives and keep them safe and "visible" in the community. Care providers used to be able to allow parents slack in paying fees, or even allow parents to use their service at subsidy rates, now these care providers can't afford to do that because their own financial situations have become so tenuous.

The seasonal nature of northern employment causes child care enrollment to fluctuate and exacerbates the fragility of centres. Serious job losses have resulted in decreased enrollment in some centres. In Prince Rupert, a group child care centre and a school age centre have closed over the last year, and some other centres are struggling. The challenge will be to have child care spaces available for the anticipated pulp mill re-opening in December. The city is already experiencing a shortage of school age spaces. Smithers has lost a school age program and a preschool and is losing an infant-toddler program. Infant-toddler spaces, and child care for families with children on mixed ages, are not meeting the demand throughout the northwest.

School closures in Kitimat forced a preschool to move into a new school classroom with no sink or bathroom. Destabilization of existing centres takes its toll on boards and staff as they cope with uncertainty and the pressures of finding and preparing replacement program spaces.

One of the saddest symbols of the loss of child care in the north is the transformation of an infant centre into a bar-tending classroom at a community college in Prince George. The toddler centre at the same college has closed, and the 3-5 centre is struggling with cuts to its services. In Terrace, the campus child care centre lost funding, but a group of parents and staff has worked diligently all summer to form a new non-profit society to resurrect the toddler and 3-5 programs. At both colleges, child care fees have risen sharply. Students are finding it increasingly challenging to pay for campus care.

The northwest region is in crisis due to a shortage of licensed early childhood educators. However, Northwest Community College has suspended the Early Childhood Education training program as funding cuts prevent offering a repeat of their innovative program of providing workplace-based education reached into numerous villages over the past two years with practical on-site support.

These are very difficult times for children, families, caregivers and for people who care about what happens to our communities.

Coco Schau is the Co-ordinator of the Skeena Child Care Resource and Referral program as well she is a current member of the Provincial Child Care Council.