

## Chairperson's Report

Dear Friends,

During the early days of the Campbell government many activists described a state of such shock that for a time we became immobilized. The cuts to social programs were so deep, so devastating that even the most pessimistic of us were unable to fathom the cruelty. It took awhile for some of us to get back on our feet – but we're there now and the fight back is in full swing throughout communities in BC. With upcoming elections in 2004 and 2005, people in our province are coming together, strengthening our networks and developing strategies to prepare us to defeat the provincial Liberals and to ensure that social programs are not minimized at the federal level. If you haven't checked out our web site lately please take a minute to do so. There you'll find a variety of materials and reports including our submissions to the provincial and federal finance committees, our response to cuts/changes to supported child care as well as our continued involvement at the Child Care Advocacy Forum table.

Around the province our members have been actively working with other social justice groups to build alliances and ensure that we provide support to each other. Not only are we learning more about the work of other activists but also we are bringing information about child care to a number of diverse tables. Last year key 'sectors' were identified by the Board and work began to find ways to work together in partnership. A natural place to start was with Labour as our ties have always been strong. As a result, we will be co-hosting a symposium with the BCGEU in November to explore strategies that will advance the child care agenda in the upcoming elections. Although the forum is being held in the Lower Mainland, so is not accessible to many of our members, I'm thrilled that we were able to secure funding in order to bring the Coalition's Regional Network participants from around the province to Vancouver in order to participate. A copy of the poster for the Friday night Forum is included with your Newsletter package – if you do live or work in the Lower Mainland please spread the word. We are looking forward to an exciting discussion! ( What I can't figure out though, is , who IS this Susan HARVEY who's representing the Coalition?? I've never heard of her!!)

Partnerships have been growing throughout the year with a variety of women's groups as well. Board members have been attending local symposiums and conferences and the Coalition has made small financial contributions to a number of women's groups to assist in their important work. Plans are developing to host some kind of public event in the Spring to highlight services that support women and children.

Our Regional Activists' Network is a group of individuals throughout the province who are meeting together (through email and conference calls) to discuss issues affecting their regions and to develop province-wide strategies for addressing the cuts to child care. Rita (Chudnovsky) and Sharon (Gregson) hosted the first official call recently and reported to the Board how inspiring the group was, and how much we all have to learn from these dynamic community activists.

Finally, the Board is trying to find ways to better facilitate the participation of our Lower Mainland membership in more active ways in campaigns and other Coalition activities. Participation at the Board level is certainly one way that members can participate, although a commitment at the Board level is often overwhelming. However, there are certainly opportunities for more involvement including special events, political demonstrations, workshops etc. We are committed to building an email list of members who self-identify as wanting to more actively participate in the work and then contacting these members regarding special events. Please email us at [info@cccabc.bc.ca](mailto:info@cccabc.bc.ca) to add your name to the list.

The work, as always, seems never ending, and as one friend put it "we just have to put on our hip waders and wade into this &#\$!!!" We CAN defeat the Liberals anti-child care policies – it will take all our efforts but it can be done. Do we really have a choice?

Susan Harney

## Concerns with MCFD Supported Child Care Refocus

As a childcare provider, I have grave concerns about the impacts of the changes to Supported Child Care proposed in MCFD's Discussion Paper. In the past ten years, we have worked hard in our communities to come to a point where children with extra support needs and their families are included in the full range of childcare settings. While the newly titled 'Child Development Program' promotes the expansion of supports to children with special needs into a broader range of community settings, which is a laudable goal, it is dismissive of the central role that childcare has played in supporting children and families.

The value of inclusive childcare which has been the cornerstone of Supported Child Care to date has not been acknowledged in this Discussion Paper. Nor has the work of the trained and qualified staff who include children with extra support needs in the variety of childcare settings. The suggestion that high school and college volunteers can effectively support the development of children with extra needs - may lead to a reduction in costs - but is a dangerous threat to quality services.

As childcare is slotted in the domain of the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and

Women's Services, the Discussion Paper seems to be saying that childcare is not a critical element in this MCFD refocus. The fact is that the inclusion of children with extra support needs is the sole responsibility of MCFD. The Paper claims to promote a continuum of services but there is a disconnect between the Ministries that cannot help but translate into a similar lack of coordination between services.

In its rightful emphasis on child development, the Paper does not seem to show an awareness that quality childcare is based on child development. As Early Childhood Educators, we are trained in child development and offer programs that nurture the development of children. This Discussion Paper does not seem to recognize that child development is a core value in quality childcare programs.

As well, in its discussion about social inclusion, the Paper does not seem to recognize that social inclusion happens naturally in childcare settings. The quantity, quality and continuity of social opportunities for children in childcare are countless. The development of social skills such as formation of friendships, problem solving and conflict resolution are a major focus of childcare programs, not an incidental benefit as in experiences such as Swimming

Lessons or Library Times. The benefits of peer group interactions in childcare settings to both children with extra support needs and their typically developing peers cannot be under-valued.

The Discussion Paper does not seem to fully recognize that childcare programs are community settings in which the inclusion and support of children and families is a central goal. While families who work and study are seen to need childcare programs to support those activities, the Paper does not seem to recognize the other critical role of childcare programs, that of social inclusion of children and families, a place where families connect.

Nor does the paper touch on the benefits of early identification and early intervention that happen in inclusive childcare settings. The inclusive programs that have had the benefit of well-trained and qualified staff and strong connections with community agencies and therapeutic services, are equipped to recognize when children need extra support and to provide that support effectively.

The expectation that current funding levels will fulfill an expanded mandate with an elimination of waitlists from

birth to six leads to the concern about resulting reductions in services to children and families. Will children get less quantity and quality of services so that more can be included in a greater variety of community settings? Such a dilution of services would erode the benefits of early intervention.

As the Paper moves us away from the current funding model, it ignores the fact that childcare settings have often proven to provide cost-efficient services by the "clustering" of some children with extra support needs. Aside from such cost benefits, many parents appreciate the emotional and practical support of having other families close by facing similar issues.

By devolving the Child Development Program to the community, there is also a concern that the roles played by Ministry social workers and staff, who are not funded by the SCC budget, will now add a financial pressure and take funding away from front line support to children and families.

In these points, I try mainly to highlight the area that was ignored in the Discussion Paper - childcare. There are many other areas of concern not addressed in this response; relating to issues such as timelines for implementation that are so short as to allow for only the most nominal community input, impacts of changes to subsidies, including the special needs subsidy, implications of the proposed alternate funding options to families and childcare, lack of cost analysis, and a real threat of a two-tiered childcare sector. Both childcare providers and the families we work with must take the time to engage in this refocus, understand the issues and impacts and respond clearly to government.

**By Ruth Bancroft - who has 25 years experience with inclusive childcare**

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## **CHILD CARE AND LABOUR WORKING TOGETHER FOR PUBLICLY FUNDED CHILD CARE**

On November 7 and 8, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and the BC Government and Services Employees Union will cosponsor a weekend of events to help us build stronger links between child care advocates and the labour movement. **We invite all Coalition members, supporters, friends and colleagues to join us for the kick-off event – a lively public panel discussion on**

*“How to Advance a Progressive Child Care Agenda in the Next Federal and Provincial Elections”*

With panelists:

Libby Davies – NDP MP, Vancouver East

Susan Harney – Chair, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

George Heyman – President, BC Government and Services Employees Union

Date: Friday, Nov 7

Time: 7:00 – 9:30 pm

Where: Vancouver Public Library – Main Branch – Alice Mackay Room

The panel will be followed by a day long invitational strategy session on Nov. 8 at which labour activities and child care advocates from across BC will:

- ✓ Learn more from and about each other
- ✓ Explore joint strategies for organizing, bargaining and advocating
- ✓ Develop common messages for the next federal and provincial elections
- ✓ Plan for mobilizing our constituents

Watch for a full report on the results of the strategy session in our next Newsletter.

# Child Care Advocacy Forum

#300 - 210 W. Broadway  
Vancouver, BC  
Phone: (604) 515-6257  
Toll Free: 1-877-361-1116  
Fax: (604) 709-5662  
www.cccabc.bc.ca/forum

## Participating Organizations:

BC Association of  
Child Care Services

Coalition of Child Care  
Advocates of BC

Early Childhood  
Educators of BC

School Age Child Care  
Association of BC

Westcoast Child Care  
Resource Centre

Western Canada Family  
Child Care Association  
of BC

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- BC/Yukon Region  
through Coalition of Child  
Care Advocates of BC



VANCOUVER  
FOUNDATION

## THEY CAN AFFORD IT!

August, 2003

Recently, Minister Lynn Stephens announced 'key elements' of a long-term plan for child care. Minister Stephens says that this is a 'sustainable plan' that 'truly supports families, children and childcare providers' in BC. We disagree! Over a 3 year period, this 'child care plan' represents cuts of close to \$50 million in provincial spending on child care. As a result, affordability, inclusion, quality and caregiver remuneration are getting worse, not better.

We have a concrete solution for how government can undo the damage and invest in a child care system that meets the needs of all. Here's how:

✓ Under the federal/provincial Agreement on Early Childhood Development Initiatives (ECDI) signed in Sept. 2000, BC will receive \$66.3 million in 2003/04; \$66.1 million in 2004/05; \$66.6 million in 2005/06.

✓ Under the new federal/provincial Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care (MF) signed in March, 2003 BC will receive \$3.3 million this year, \$10.4 in 2004/05; \$20.1 million in 2005/06; \$40.5 million in 2006/07; and \$47.6 million on 2007/08.

✓ If the provincial government followed community advice and spent 2/3 of the ECDI funds on child care and all of the funds under the Multilateral Framework on regulated child care, as they are required to do, over the next 3 years, they could increase child care spending as follows:

2003/04 - \$44.2 million (ECDI) + \$3.3 million (MF) = \$47.5 million  
2004/05 - \$44 million (ECDI) + \$10.4 million (MF) = \$54.4 million  
2005/06 - \$44.4 million (ECDI) + \$20.1 million (MF) = \$64.5 million

These funds and a commitment to restore provincial child care spending to 2000/01 levels could begin to make a real difference. BC could cap parent fees at more affordable rates, bring wages in the sector up to adequate benchmarks, stabilize existing child care programs and enhance support to parents and caregivers.

**It's not about what government can afford to do – it's about political will.**

To date, BC has only spent \$6 million of its total ECDI funds on child care. Another \$6 million of the 2001/02 ECDI allocation has not yet been spent. The government has also announced that all of the first year's allocation under the new Multilateral Framework will go to Supported Child Care, which is being refocused on child development rather than on child care.

Clearly, this government is prepared to spend federal and provincial funds on **anything but child care.**

Email Premier Campbell at [premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:premier@gov.bc.ca), Minister Lynn Stephens at [lynn.stephens.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:lynn.stephens.mla@leg.bc.ca), the Minister of Finance, Gary Collins at [gary.collins.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:gary.collins.mla@leg.bc.ca) and your MLA. Ask them to explain where \$166.4 million that could and should be spent on child care is going.

## Child Care Scenarios

The following shows the calculations for three different family configurations. In all cases, the family is better off financially if the parent is employed and earning \$30,000. The families include:

- Single parent with a 3 year old in child care at \$600 per month
- Two parent family with one parent earning \$60,000 and second parent staying at home with the 3 year old child with no earned income and not using child care
- Two parent family with one parent earning \$60,000 and a second earning \$30,000 using child care at \$600 per month for their 3 year old child.

It is assumed that the two parent family puts aside \$8,000 in RRSPs which is deferred income and is advantageous for tax purposes. We assume the single parent does not have sufficient disposable income to put aside funds in an RRSP.

It should be noted in the case of the single parent that only \$353 of the \$2,806 in refundable child tax benefits is paid by the province. All the rest is based on the federal CCTB and NCB contributions. There are no provincial benefits for either of the two parent families. Calculations are derived from the child tax benefit calculator.

	Single parent	Two parent 1 earner	Two parent 2 earners
Gross Income	30,000	60,000	90,000
Child care expenses	7,200	0	7,200
BC child care subsidy	0	0	0
Maximum child care expense deduction	7,000	0	7,000
Other deductions (e.g., RRSP, dues, etc.)	0	8,000	8,000
Net income for tax and refundable credits	23,000	52,000	75,000
Federal income tax	1,075	7,285	8,028
Provincial income tax	337	2,767	3,922
CPP deductions	1,309	1,802	3,111
EI deductions	630	819	1,449
Refundable child tax benefits	2,806	938	131
GST rebate	546	0	0
<b>Net income after tax and employee deductions and child care expenses</b>	<b>23,001</b>	<b>40,165</b>	<b>58,621</b>

Michael Goldberg  
Social Planning and Research Council of BC

## **Knowledge and Power**

The “Knowledge and Power” day held June 14 and hosted by the Northern Communities Children’s Coalition (NCCC) brought together 50 participants from various child care sectors in the province’s northern region. NCCC members created this knowledge and power day as a proactive approach to address the changing climate of child care and early childhood service in the north. This coalition, a child care sub-committee of Make Children First, encompasses all issues related to child care. The Make Children First mandate is to “build a community-based system of supports to improve the health and well-being of children from preconception to school entry.”

The purpose of the day was to pull together a variety of the stakeholders to explore the issues facing northern communities. The communities represented included Prince George, Burns Lake, Fort St. James, Atlin and Mackenzie. The new provincial governance model centres around community governance, which made this day a first step toward involving communities and encouraging communities to become actively involved. In order to bring together a cross-section of service providers from different communities, a variety of sectors were invited: family daycare, group daycare, preschool, afterschool care, supported child care, early childhood education, Aboriginal infant development program, infant development program, reserve daycare, Headstart, licensing, speech pathologists, youth pastors, and the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Speakers were Cliff Dezell, North Region Child and Family Community Planning Committee Chair and Dr. Clyde Hertzman, Canada Research Chair in Population Health and Human Development and Director, Human Early Learning Partnership.

The plan for the day was two-fold – the morning provided information about the changes in the provincial plan and insight into current research and how it applies to northern communities and practices. The afternoon focused on the successes and gaps in providing services to children and families in the north.

The day wrapped up by revisiting the day’s goals. Participants felt: celebrations and gaps had been successfully explored; a beginning was made with inclusivity; a good start was made around community sustainability; cross-sectoral relationships were beginning; and the seeds had been planted for each community to develop a community coalition and advocacy group. Participants agreed further empowerment days were needed and everyone appeared committed to working on the identified gaps and pursuing the goals. A decision was made to keep the group going and to choose two achievable goals to begin with and work toward providing a tangible result for participants. The goals will be determined by the available financial resources and the volunteers who are willing to get the work off the ground. A first step will be to take a summary of the day’s events and findings to the September meeting of the North Region Child and Family Community Planning Committee.

**Submitted by Christine Jackson  
in Prince George**

# REPORT FROM THE NORTHWEST

## Looking at 2003

Terrace & area is still in an economic downturn with the ongoing closure of Skeena Cellulose, Prince Rupert's pulp mill, Hazelton's sawmill and the sale of Smithers' mill. The mass exodus of professionals and working families moving to the urban areas continues; the Olympics are no cause for celebration here. But we have majestic mountains and fire in our bellies. And we are survivors.

## Loss Of Funding Assistance Program (FAP):

- July 2002: the first licensed group centre (School Age Centre) in Thornhill, a settlement next to Terrace, opened in a facility funded under Expansion Grant
- Sept 2002: unable to fill spaces (blockfunding \$7/day dropped to \$5)
- Jan 2003: more spaces unfilled, reduction in staff
- June 2003: centre closure - Sept 2003: still closed, no takers this fall
- School Age Centres opened under Expansion Grant also closed in Kitimat and Smithers

## 4 Day School Week Comes To Terrace, Kitimat, Stewart & Hazelton

- School District #82's plan and eventual move to 4 day school week did not include childcare
- Trustee came to childcare planning meeting, unaware of licencing regulations, no idea of numbers of children impacted or numbers of School Age childcare spaces available
- Only 1 School Age Centre program is full, 1 is closed and a 3<sup>rd</sup> has spaces
- Parents have opted for student babysitters, Red Cross "home alone" training, latchkey care and phone contact (rationale is shortened times left alone: longer school day)
- Some of our most vulnerable children have no safe place on Fridays to replace school (food, protection, supervision) and unable to access childcare

## Changes To Child Care Subsidy Program & Delivery

Subsidy program for Northwest changes to a call centre in Prince George (except Terrace's, co-located at One Stop Access until April 2004)

- MHR (Income Assistance) offices have gone to a call centre model
- No fixed caseloads, different EAW phone contact each time, No relationship with clients
- No receptionist, just recorded message and use of a computer for eligibility
- No phone? Forget privacy. You can call from the MHR office in front of everyone
- Not on welfare? Where do parents get info on applying for subsidy? Don't know? Can't apply
- Cuts to preschool subsidy for stay at home parents: 50 % loss in enrollment in one preschool
- Cuts to preschool subsidy & SCC force closure of 20 year old program in Smithers.
- Subsidy does not come close to covering cost of care

## BUS TRIP TO BURNS LAKE

24 childcare folks from 4 communities bused to the Canada NorthWest FASD Partnership Symposium in Burns Lake (5 hour ride)

- Fabulous networking with enthusiastic reports on workshop information
- 2 inspiring panels with birth moms and youth living with FASD
- Rekindled spirits of careproviders - FUN
- Silent protest against current government policy

**Submitted by Coco Schau in Terrace**

## Parents say BC can afford to give our children the best start!

Over 380 parents from communities across BC added their voices and support to the brief, included on the next two pages, written by BC Parent Voices. Here's what some of the parents told us --

*"We can't believe the government is directing SCC away from child care. The developmental benefits for our child with additional support needs are so obvious."*

*"Thank you for your work on this issue. My wife and I have 2 children in a Burnaby child care facility. I have recently joined the board of directors. We are definitely in support of your efforts to convince the Provincial budget makers to put money back into the early childhood education system."*

*"Please add my name - I fully agree that our government needs to put the needs of our children first."  
"I fully support the BC Parent Voices brief. I also want to add that child care is a vital necessity in the lives of families who need to work to support themselves. It is disturbing to me that children, and their families, are not financially supported for the most basic of needs, that is, a safe, nurturing and supportive environment for their children so they can go out and earn a living, or go to school so they can earn a better living in order to provide that best they can for their child or children. It is outrageous that this basic right is not being met, especially when there is an adequate tax base in this province for this. "*

*"My husband and I had to put our son in unlicensed care when he was an infant because there were no other spaces. We are so glad now that he is happily in a licensed three to five program, but the daycare fees are so much that our two income family just barely manages. We wonder if we can afford to have another child."*

*"I am currently on mat leave and when I return to work I will be paying about \$1600 a month for child care for my two children. Not only is the cost ludicrous, but there are very few options especially for licensed group daycare. Why are there so few options for group care when there is such a demand? I just put them on a waiting list 7 months in advance and am just praying that they will get a spot in time. I fully agree that our government needs to put the needs of our children first and I absolutely protest any cutbacks!"*

*"It is ludicrous that in our community there are only three licensed quality child care facilities. I had to put my baby's name on the wait list even before he was born. I agree that spending on licensed quality child care must be a BC budget priority."*

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### **International Pressure Builds for Canada to Take Action on Child Care - October 3, 2003**

Momentum for quality child care is growing now that the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child has encouraged the federal government to make child care a priority. In its concluding observations released today, the Committee expressed concern about high costs of child care, paucity of spaces and lack of national standards. It urged Canada to eliminate disparities in child care services across the country, and to move forward in developing a coordinated approach to ensure quality child care is available to all children, regardless of their economic or geographic status.

### **Fact and fantasy: Eight Myths about Early Childhood Education and Care**

By Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky, Economics, Division of Management, University of Toronto

- \*Young children need full-time care from their mothers.
- \*Child care harms children.
- \*Families should pay for their own child care.
- \*Parents always know best.
- \*Stay-at-home mothers are discriminated against in public policy.
- \*Mothers would prefer to stay home.
- \*Child care erodes family values.
- \*We can't afford early childhood education and care

# The members of the BC Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

Submitted October 2003

Submitted by Sharon Gregson and Dianne Goldberg on behalf of BC Parent Voices

## Introduction

We are parent voices from across BC who are concerned about our provincial government's budget cuts and policy changes in child care. We see first hand how these decisions are affecting BC's children, families, communities and the economy.

**In the Budget for 2003**, the BC government says that its goal is "a sustainable child care system that meets the needs of families". And throughout this last year, **you told us** that: BC needs a long term "new strategic plan to address child care in a comprehensive, coordinated fashion"; that "low income families are better able to meet the cost of child care"; and that "government is enabled to make informed decisions on issues that affect child care services."

[Source: [http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/sp2003/caws/caws\\_child\\_link1.htm](http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/sp2003/caws/caws_child_link1.htm)]

## But this is our reality – a snapshot of child care for children and families in BC:

- a significant majority of BC's children whose mothers are in the paid labour force do **not** have access to a licensed child care space. Obviously there are too few licensed spaces to meet the needs of families.
- our provincial government's spending on licensed child care over three years and across various ministries will be reduced by approximately \$50 million.
- government budget decisions to spend less are making it 100% impossible to build a high quality sustainable child care system that meets the needs of families.
- with less government funding, more families are experiencing increased financial stress because more of a family's monthly earnings are required to pay for child care.
- despite your promises to protect services for children with special needs, recent changes mean that fewer families are able to afford access to inclusive, licensed child care programs - pre schools and full-day child care programs. A 'stay at home parent' is no longer eligible for the Special Needs Supplement.
- despite your promises of "targeting support to families who need it most", low income earners with an 'at home parent' are now unable to access any child care subsidy – their option to choose to use licensed child care programs e.g., pre school, is now eliminated.

*Our family was looking for infant child care and we had our name on the infant centre waitlist in our community. After several months, they let us know there was a vacancy for a September 2003 start. But I was still on maternity leave and at first did not plan to go back to work until January, 2004. We took the space for September, because if we didn't, we knew from a lot of our friends and work colleagues that there are long waitlists. There is a real shortage of licensed infant and toddler spaces and we definitely wanted a licensed space in a child care centre. The fees for infant care are so expensive, but we are really pleased with the quality of the care – the child care staff are trained and qualified. We are lucky we can afford it. We are also lucky that we put our names on the wait list in time to get offered a space. Several of our friends are still waiting for a space and they cannot go back to work until they get the kind of care they want for their children.*

## **Recommendations for Budget 2004**

*“What children experience in the first five years of life stays with them forever. Much of what they will achieve physically, intellectually and socially in later life is determined during this time.”*

[Source: Achieve BC – BC Government web site]

### **We urge you to recommend that spending on licensed, quality child care become a provincial budget priority.**

1. Reverse the current and planned child care funding cuts, and restore provincial child care funding across various ministries to 2000/01 levels.
2. Live up to your promises to develop a “sustainable child care system that meets the needs of families”.
3. Stop all plans to use the federal funding to replace provincial budget cuts. Start using a fair share of the federal ECDI funding for regulated child care and use all of the federal Multilateral Framework Agreement funding as it is intended “to further invest in provincially/territorially regulated early learning and child care programs for children under six”. Use the federal dollars PLUS provincial dollars, and begin to build an affordable, quality, inclusive and regulated child care system in BC.

### **BC can afford to give our children the best start!**

*I am a single young parent with a 4 year old in a 3-5 daycare. My gross income is \$24,300 a year. Because of cuts, I don't get as much subsidy as I used to and now I have to pay an additional \$1,534 a year for child care. I cannot afford it.*

*We have 2 children, a 3 year old and 6 month old. My husband got laid off and is waiting for his E.I and I am on maternity E.I.B. and receive about \$800/month. We want to send our 3 year old to preschool, which costs \$200/month. Because I am at home now we do not qualify for subsidy anymore. The subsidy worker told us that before the rules changed, we would have qualified for \$107/month. It would be difficult, but we would have done something to make it work because we know it is important for our child's development. But without subsidy, we cannot afford pre school. She will miss out.*

*My husband is out of work and so he left the city to try to find a job. I have to return to work to help support our family. I found out that licensed infant care is around \$1,000/mth, and it would be \$550/mth for our 4 year old. I applied for subsidy but with a net income of \$2,500/mth, I can only receive \$409/mth, that would leave me with a monthly child care bill of around \$1,150/mth (\$13,800 a year)! With rent of \$900/mth, it would leave me with about \$450/mth to live on. I had to try to find “cheaper” child care. A friend told me about an older lady down the street. Now she looks after my children for \$1000/mth, but she wants it in cash only. That means I cannot claim it on income tax. And my daughter has no playmates her own age. It's not a licensed child care – the lady has no liability insurance, no training, and no criminal record check. I am really worried cause when this woman gets frustrated she often puts my 4 year old in front of the television.*

*You could call us middle income earners – we have two salaries. The school age program is full and has long waiting lists. We have been on their wait list for 6 months. But still there are no vacancies. And so now our two children, 8 and 11 years old, are on their own at home until we get home from work.*

*Last year we had 3 year olds with special needs in our inclusive pre school. We had extra staffing from Supported Child Care (SCC) and the children benefited from all of the early learning opportunities with other children and with trained child care staff. These children were registered for our 4 year old program in September. But with the recent changes in July, the children cannot attend anymore because their families cannot afford the pre school fees. Now to get the Special Needs Supplement, even if you are a low income family, the parents(s) have to be working or in school and if you are a 'stay at home parent' you are no longer eligible to receive the Supplement or the Child Care Subsidy. Our community is hurting – we have a lot of unemployed parents and all of these families are left with no choices when it comes to pre school or any other licensed child care programs. These cuts and changes are really hurting the children, our pre school and our community.*

# 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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## **2003 Pre-Budget Consultation to the Select Standing Committee on Finance October 10, 2003**

### **Introduction**

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) is a voluntary non-profit organization of parents, child care providers, interested citizens, and community organizations.

We support:

- ✓ The development of a comprehensive, accessible, and affordable non-profit child care system in B.C. and across Canada.
- ✓ The right of every child and family to quality child care in their community.
- ✓ A range of inclusive licensed and regulated child care choices including full and part-time programs in family and centre-based settings.
- ✓ Stable, adequate government funding to sustain quality child care programs.
- ✓ Child care worker 's rights to wages and working conditions which reflect the level of training, responsibility and value of work performed.

### **The Deepening Child Care Crisis in BC**

Over the last two and a half years, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC has monitored, with growing alarm, the negative impact of provincial funding cuts on regulated child care in BC. We have informed government and the community about the declining state of access to child care; we have made concrete recommendations about how government can support a high quality, affordable, accessible child care system and we have supported and encouraged parents and others across BC to tell their elected representatives why the current provincial child care policies are not working.

Yet, despite the efforts of thousands of British Columbians, the provincial government has not listened and things are getting worse not better. While government continues to speak in positive and optimistic terms about its child care policy, the reality for children, families and communities is very different.

As the committee charged with the goal of recommending ways in which the next provincial budget can deliver "a sustainable child care system that meets the needs of families", it is essential that you understand the current situation.

[Source: [http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/sp2003/caws/caws\\_child\\_link1.htm](http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/sp2003/caws/caws_child_link1.htm)]

Here are just some of the facts that you should know:

- ✓ As a result of cuts to the child care subsidy program, many low and moderate income children are being withdrawn from licensed child care programs because their families cannot afford to pay the fees. In a survey of 700 caregivers across BC in the fall of 2002, 57% of caregivers reported that they had fewer subsidized children in their child care programs.
- ✓ Despite the research proving that quality care promotes healthy childhood development while poor quality care can do harm, a growing number of BC children are in temporary, make shift child care arrangements because their families have no other choice. Our contacts across BC report that many families can only afford the 'cheapest' care available and that school aged children are increasingly left on their own. These factors are associated with poorer quality care that leads to less than optimal childhood development outcomes.
- ✓ Programs that serve low and moderate income communities are closing or in danger of closing because the families they serve cannot afford to pay fees. Programs that serve more affluent communities where parents can afford to pay full fees are full.
- ✓ The amount of funds a child care program receives under the new child care operating grant is based on enrollment. Programs that are full, generally because families can afford to pay fees, receive MORE money from the provincial government than programs that are under enrolled. Public funds are disproportionately supporting care for children from affluent families.
- ✓ As opposed to previous provincial child care funding there is no longer a requirement that the current child care operating funding be used to keep fees affordable or wages at an adequate level. As long as enrollment reports are accurate, child care employers can use the funds for anything they choose. The result is that fees are on the increase and wages are on the decline. This negatively affects access, quality and stability of care.

## **The Root Causes of the Child Care Crisis**

The underlying causes of the growing crisis in child care rest firmly at the feet of the provincial government. Here's why:

- ✓ Over a three year period (2002 – 2005) the provincial government has cut or has announced its intentions to cut close to \$50 million from spending on regulated child care.
- ✓ Federal transfer funds that should be used to improve licensed child care in BC are being used to cover up some of the biggest problems caused by provincial spending cuts.

- ✓ The government is making a false and dangerous separation between child care and early childhood development policies and funding. Like in the 1970's and 1980's, child care is once again seen as a labour force attachment strategy for poor women - with little or no concern for the quality of the care their children receive. At the same time, government purports to demonstrate its commitment to 'early childhood development' by providing small grants to a patchwork of programs that, while perhaps beneficial for some, do nothing to address the developmental needs of 388,900 children in BC under the age of 12 whose mothers are in the paid labour force.

## **Recommendations**

Regrettably, our recommendations are not new. However, the need to act on them becomes more urgent with every passing day.

We therefore strongly urge the committee to recommend that the 2003/04 provincial budget support the development of a child care system that meets the needs of all children and families:

1. Restore provincial spending on child care to 2000/01 levels. Reverse funding cuts that have been made to date and halt any further projected cuts.
2. Develop and implement a 5 year plan that moves child care from the current user fee system to a publicly funded system.
3. Ensure that public funding for child care is used to support quality care for children, affordable fees for parents and adequate wages and working condition for those who care for our children.
4. Use federal early childhood and child care transfer payments to supplement rather than replace provincial spending on child care.
5. End the current separation between child care and early childhood development policies and recognize child care as a cornerstone of a comprehensive early years strategy.

**Submitted by**  
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## **Introduction**

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) is a voluntary non-profit organization of parents, child care providers, interested citizens, and community organizations.

### ***We support:***

- The development of a comprehensive, accessible and affordable, publicly-funded, non-profit child care system in B.C. and across Canada.
- The right of every child and family to quality child care in their community.
- A range of inclusive child care choices including licensed, regulated family and centre-based care.
- Stable, adequate government funding to sustain quality child care programs.
- Child care worker's rights to wages and working conditions which reflect the level of training, responsibility and value of work performed.

We are pleased to submit this written response to the 2003 pre budget discussions of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance and have made note of the "important themes" stressed by the Committee as we "strive to maintain our recent momentum".

### **Specifically you ask:**

- *what taxation, spending and other measures should be taken to ensure economic growth and job creation, balanced federal budgets...*
- *what taxation, spending and other measures should be taken to ensure progress in investing in, and caring for, all members of Canadian society*
- *what taxation, spending and other measures should be taken to ensure that urban, rural and remote communities are desirable places in which to live and work...*

### **The path is clear**

The CCCABC, along with most other Canadians, believe that these important questions, vital to the success of our country, can be addressed through the implementation of a publicly funded child care system that meets the needs of all Canada's children (birth to twelve years of age) regardless of their ability, family income or employment status, language, culture or geographic location.

Canada remains one of the few highly developed industrialized countries in the world that does not provide a publicly-funded child care system for its youngest citizens. The research, the statistics and the daily experience of families across our country demonstrates the immediate need for a pan-Canadian child care system. The facts are so overwhelming that there can no longer be any doubt of the path our politicians must take.

## **We do know that:**

- Over 1,000,000 mothers of pre-school children in Canada are in the paid labour force (Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2001 – Friendly, Beach and Turiano).
- The current economic contribution of these working mothers to the Canadian economy can be conservatively estimated at about \$27 billion per year. If we include reduction in investment and loss of productivity there would be a net loss of \$83 billion per year if all of these mothers left the paid labour force\*.
- Good child care allows more parents to work. This makes it possible for parents to support their families and to contribute through taxes to the well-being of all Canadians\*.
- Quality of child care makes a difference in virtually all childhood development outcomes regardless of the child's situation or background\*.
- Parents care about their children but most families cannot afford to purchase child care of high enough quality to create all the benefits that society would like. Public funding improves quality and generates more public benefit\*.

We know that child care facilitates economic growth and job creation. It is a critical component of the investment that should be made in the caring of Canadians and a comprehensive publicly funded child care system is necessary to ensure that urban, rural and remote communities are desirable places in which to live and work.

\*Fact and Fantasy: Eight Myths About Early Childhood Education and Care, Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky, Economics University of Toronto

## **Recent strides and pitfalls**

- September 2003 marks the third anniversary of the Early Childhood Development Agreement through which the federal government provides \$500 million per year to enable provincial and territorial governments to “improve and expand early childhood development programs and services, including child care”. This was an important opportunity for steps forward, but due to the lack of clear priorities in the Agreement, some provinces are funding improvements to aspects of regulated child care while others, like BC, have ignored the child care crisis in their province.
- In 2003 we welcomed the announcement of the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care that promised to “improve access to affordable, quality, provincially and territorially regulated early learning and child care programs”. However, we were bitterly disappointed with the level of funding allocated, particularly in the early years of the Framework. This new transfer payment made it even more apparent that the federal government must build into the funding a system of provincial/territorial responsibility, accountability and compliance for spending the money as intended. The necessity for these additional measures is evident from the BC example where new federal funding is being used to replace provincial cuts and an artificial distinction is being created between child development and child care.
- In November 2002 the National Liberal Caucus Social Policy Committee recommended: 1 billion in year one; \$2.2 billion in year two; \$3.2 billion in year three; and \$4.5 billion in year four, specifically to expand child care spaces and cover operating costs for children 3-6 years of age.

**Recommendations from  
The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC  
to the  
Standing Committee on Finance**

As Canada strives to provide all its citizens with a high quality of life we urge the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance to include in the upcoming federal budget:

1. The commitment of 1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to a publicly funded regulated child care system, as recommended by the European Union.
2. The requirement that as a condition of receiving federal child care funds, provinces/territories agree to use the funds specifically for publicly-funded, regulated, high quality, not-for-profit, accessible and affordable child care services that meet the diverse needs of the children and families in their jurisdictions.
3. The requirement that provinces/territories maintain or increase their child care spending and use federal funds to supplement rather than replace provincial/territorial child care funding.
4. The establishment of mechanisms to ensure provincial/territorial compliance with the terms of the Multilateral Agreements that include active community participation in monitoring progress and resolving disagreements and disputes.