

Coalition Board Report

Hello to all our child care friends and colleagues,

When I reflect on the changes that have happened during the past few months and the ones that are yet to come it's hard to keep an optimistic attitude that our goals and vision for a high quality, affordable, not-for-profit child care system will ever be a reality in British Columbia or Canada. On these bleak days (my mood is matching the weather) it's hard to think beyond the devastation and fear. We know that these drastic cuts will impact hard on communities and especially on those of us who are most vulnerable and marginalized. Still, we know that what we are "fighting" for IS right! All the economic reports tell us so. All child development research tells us so. And the majority of Canadians tell us so.

In this issue of the Newsletter, we have tried to update you with some of the activities of the Board. We have continued to write letters of protest, encourage members to contact their MLA's about various emerging issues and prepare presentations to a variety of provincial and federal committees. We know that EACH and EVERY letter is counted in the various Ministry offices. So while our spirits are low, it is nevertheless important to keep up the pressure.

On a very positive note, our Project (Year 2) Report, *Advocacy Connections: Working Together For Publicly Funded Child Care* was met with great enthusiasm by representatives of B.C./ Yukon Status of Women Canada. We have been encouraged to apply for continued funding which means more advocacy work will be possible.

As well, we continue to work closely with partners throughout the social service sector and beyond. This community collaboration has meant that our message is being heard in circles that previously we didn't access. I was interested, for example, to note that when Minister Coell announced his proposed changes to cut women with one year old children off social assistance, many responded with protest noting that this was the same government that had repealed the next steps of Child Care BC. In the Vancouver Sun (Thursday November 15, 2001) Coell was quoted as saying "We are certainly not going to cut people off without the ability to get day care.....". So, I think, that we can take heart -- the importance of child care is being noted. It may seem like a small point, but these are days that we need to remind ourselves of small victories.

During the winter break, take time to celebrate being with family, spend time with as many children as you can and rest up! And, as soon as an announcement is made regarding the findings from the recent survey and Liberal plans for the future of child care in BC - we will let you know immediately!

Susan Harney
For the Board of CCCABC

Advocacy and Collaboration in Trying Times

In October 2001 child care advocates from Kamloops (and region) impressed Minister Lynn Stephens and the rest of us by arranging a community meeting with not just the expected 20 participants but rather 175 participants. We asked Marilyn Lavack of the Thompson Nicola Regional Childcare Advisory Committee, just how this fantastic event was organized. This is what Marilyn shared with us.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has"

'Margaret Mead'

As an advisory committee we are constantly re-examining strategies and processes. Our goals included ways to promote collaboration between organizations, groups, individual care providers and families which would result in collective success for all. What could we do to remove or change assumptions of powerlessness and foster instead personal vision and an ability to challenge the forces of change?

As a committee our objective was to consider the requirements of our community based on the knowledge of the both the particular needs of the community, an understanding of local realities, and available recourses. We felt we had collective knowledge of::

- the barriers to providing high quality, affordable, accessible child care services
- the complex and changing needs of families
- the supports needed for the ongoing challenges that care providers confront.

As we face unprecedented challenges (what we always feel at the time), we as members of the Kamloops and region community Childcare Advisory Committee, recognizing the need for more than a cursory response to the recently distributed Child Care options survey, felt that this would be the catalyst to work with families, the child care community, media, local and provincial politicians. We felt we could begin a process that (with lots of optimism and vision) could bring about change.

This then was our opportunity to reach out, communicate issues, mobilize the community, take some risks, think creatively and collaborate.

In our first meeting we established goals, evaluated feasibility and decided 'yes' this small group of (maximum) five people could do this! In the three meetings that followed we divided tasks based on each persons particular interests skills contacts and recourses. We then proceeded to:

- Find a location (free access to school board resource building, microphones and set up)
- Contacted a number of media sources including the local cable channel.
- Set a date based upon the Ministers availability ---- panic in two weeks!
- Shared responsibility for developing, copying and distributing posters.
- We shared information with families, copied more surveys in addition to those supplied by our local child care resource and referral office. Information was sent also through the CCRRF newsletter,).

- Family and social service agencies were invited as were students from our university - ECE, Education, Social Service Worker and child and youth care programs.
- Advertising was provided through community bulletins in local papers and one advertisement sponsored by B.C.ACCS

I would like to say we all provided home baked goodies but thank goodness for Safeway!

On the day of the meeting we finally found a moderator and it was important to set guidelines for presentations. We really were optimistic, but what if only 10 or 12 people came? We had a meeting shortly before the Minister arrived where we "fine tuned" the meeting outline, put question sheets on the table, for those people who are uncomfortable speaking publicly, helped the video crew set up, and waited -- ---

We were astounded, we ran out of surveys, and actually had people lining up to join us! The presentations we had prepared in advance (in the event that important issues were not addressed) were not needed. The participants were reflective, and clearly articulated their problems and realities. Members of the committee presented additional information/statistics to reaffirm the concerns expressed.

We had in a small way helped the community to speak in one united voice; it was worth the work and the risk.

If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain.
If you want ten years of prosperity, grow forests.
If you want one hundred years of prosperity, grow leaders
_Chinese proverb

Marilyn Lavack
For the Thompson Nicola Regional Childcare Advisory Committee

Parents For Child Care

Parents for Child Care seeks to give a voice to those particularly concerned with the well-being of children -- the families! The reality is that in 70% of families with small children, both parents work outside the home, but, in British Columbia, there only exists one high-quality licensed childcare spot for every nine children that need it. Right now families are under great duress struggling to find adequate care for their children.

Parents for Child Care believes that every child deserves high quality care given by well trained child care workers in a safe environment. Many families have to put their children into care that they do not feel is safe or stimulating for their children because they have no choice. We also believe that child care should be affordable and accessible. Families often pay more in child care per month than they do in rent or mortgage payments.

Parents for Child Care targets government at all levels, municipal, provincial and federal, to inform and educate them of the desperate need for affordable, accessible, quality child care. We write letters to ministries and to the press, meet with politicians and the public to raise awareness that we need to invest in our children now in order to reap the benefits later.

Parents for Child Care acts as a forum for not only parents, but also for grandparents, aunts and uncles -- all who have an interest in our children. The lack of child care affects more than just the nuclear family. Often it is the extended family that has to fill in the gaps, many times elderly grandparents. This lack also affects businesses in British Columbia, as skilled workers cannot take jobs because they do not have care for their children. It also keeps single parents who would rather work, dependent on welfare because they cannot find and/or afford child care once they step into the labour force.

Parents for Child Care welcomes new members! We also encourage everyone with a stake in our children's future to contact their MLAs, MPs and City Councillors by mail, e-mail, fax or phone. Inform and educate them on the desperate need in British Columbia to expand child care services so that every family can count on child care being available to them when and where they need it. It is the personal stories that make politicians take note.

Healthy, happy children and families make for a healthy, happy society!



Please contact us at: pfcc30@hotmail.com

Call To Action

Many British Columbians are dreading the anticipated cuts to social services announced by the Liberal government. While many decisions have already been made, there is a small “window of opportunity” to influence some of these cuts. In the next three weeks please call your local MLA and express your concerns. Two important messages must be heard:

1. Cuts to social programs that result in less service to clients will compromise the well being of our communities.
2. This government must slow down and make public the process of review.

All programs that receive funding from the government may be affected including child care. Let your MLA know that any cuts to child care will drastically affect worker's wages, quality of programs and the ability for families to access affordable, safe care for their children.

For more information contact:

Susan Harney
s.harney@home.com

NDP CONVENTION PRESENTATION

In early November it was my pleasure to sit on the Social Panel at the NDP convention. Along with a presentation on health and social justice issues I was able to put forward some information to the delegates on the importance of affordable, accessible high quality child care for BC families. It was also an opportunity to make suggestions and comment about what the NDP did right in regard to child care over their years in government and also what they might have done differently or sooner.

The delegates were extremely interested in all the presentations on both the Economic Panel and the Social Panel. One elderly delegate told me she had been so worried about cuts to Pharmacare she had not realized how families with young children were coping with so little child care available and such high child care fees. Other delegates wanted information so that they could educate themselves on the economics of child care relating to women in the workforce and the savings to society when we collectively invest in children and families.

I did make the point that the Funding Assistance Plan was an excellent step towards a publicly funded system that would include adequate funding for infrastructure, staffing and expansion. BUT I added that if the Funding Assistance Plan had been introduced at the start of the NDP term rather than the end of their mandate the Liberals might not have found it so easy to repeal the Child Care BC legislation. All in all it was a good exercise in educating and advocating and a very receptive audience!

And, at the national NDP convention in Winnipeg, the delegates unanimously supported a resolution to continue pressing for a national child care program.

Sharon Gregson
gregson@sfu.ca

**PRESENTATION
TO THE
FEDERAL STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

October 23, 2001

Presented by:

*Susan Harney
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C.*

*In partnership with
The Child Care Advocacy Forum*

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C., the organization I am here representing today, has been advocating for over twenty years for a child care system that is high quality, affordable, accessible, publicly funded and accountable. We are a voluntary organization of parents, child care providers, community organizations, unions and interested citizens.

The Coalition is also a founding and participating member of the Child Care Advocacy Forum which brings together six (6) provincial child care organizations and represents over 4,000 members.

Two years ago, the people of British Columbia responded in unprecedented numbers to a provincial child care discussion paper "Building a Better Future for British Columbia's Kids". More than 10,000 responses from the public indicated that over 94% of respondents supported an increase of public funding for child care programs. Indeed, as you know, the vast majority of Canadians believe that investing in the early years development of children is necessary for the good of our country.

Since the change in government in our province in the spring of 2001, British Columbians have again been asked to contribute to yet another child care survey. To date, the Minister of State for Women's Equality has received more than 3,400 surveys and more continue to arrive. There is no reason to believe that these respondents will not once again urge the government to spend more money on child care.

Child care advocates are calling for "enough to surveys". Time and time again Canadians have responded with overwhelming support for a coordinated range of services for children and their families

- recent polls indicate that 90% of Canadians believe high-quality child care is important to help ensure Canada's social and economic well-being
- 81% of those polled think governments should develop a plan for a comprehensive child care system
- another poll found that 76% of Canadians believe child care should be available to all families with costs shared by governments and families
- 65% of Canadians are willing to pay more taxes in order to ensure that children can access high quality child care programs.

(Angus Reid 1999 Environics and Insight Research 1996)

If those statistics won't convince you, let me point out a few more.

- More than three quarter of mothers with children aged 6-14 are in the workforce as are seven out of ten mothers with children under age 6 (Profiling Canada's Families II, Vanier Institute of the Family, 2000)
- Economists from Statistics Canada project that the labour participation of women aged 15-44 will rise from the current rate of approx. 71% to about 80% by the year 2011 (Our Child Care Workforce, Human Resource Sector Study on child care, 1998)
- Almost 400,000 children are born each year, and 86% of their mothers end up back in the workplace in a year. (February 25,000 – the Globe and Mail "A mother's dilemma: children or job?")

- The Vanier Institute of the Family estimates that women in the labour force contribute approximately \$25.5 billion dollars a year in federal and provincial taxes (Speech by Dr. Robert Glossup, Vanier Institute of the Family)
- There has been a 400% increase in the use of paid child care services by preschool children of families since 1967 (Our Child Care Workforce, Human Resource Sector Study on Child Care, 1998)
- For every \$1 spent on child care there is a \$2 economic benefit (The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care, Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky, 1998)
- In 1998 the cost of raising a child from birth to age 18 was estimated to be \$160,000 – up by \$4000 from 1995. The largest proportion of this cost – 33% was attributed to child care and shelter was the next largest expenditure at 23% (The Progress of Canada's Children 1998: Focus on Youth, Canadian Council on social Development, 1998)
- Between 1991 – 1998, the proportion of workers with dependants who reported excess tension due to family/work conflicts increased from 38% to 44% (The Progress of Canada's Children: Into the Millennium, Canadian Council on social Development, 1999)
- A child's brain development in the first six years of life sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health (The Early Years Study: Reversing the Real Brain Drain – Dr. Fraser Mustard and Hon. Margaret Norrie McCain, 1998)
- Children's well-being and development suffer when they have poor quality care, and even an advantaged family background can't protect them (Partners in Quality, Canadian Child Care Federation, 1999)

The message from the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C. and the Child Care Advocacy Forum is quite simple and straightforward.

1. The forecasted federal surpluses far exceed the relatively small investment that the federal government has committed to the Agreement on Early Childhood Development Services signed by federal, provincial and territorial governments in September 2000.
2. To date, action stemming from this Agreement clearly demonstrates that the level of funding is inadequate to meet the needs of Canada's children and families. As a result, children and families across Canada still do not have equitable access to child care services.

We therefore recommend that the next federal budget include:

- An allocation of \$2 billion for Early Childhood Development Initiatives in each of the next five years. This will still leave the federal government with sufficient budgetary surpluses to meet its other objectives and will make a real difference in meeting the objectives of the Agreement on Early Childhood Development.
- Dedication of 2/3 of these funds to support provincial and territorial development of quality child care systems, within a mutually negotiated child care strategy for all of the children of Canada.

The time for action is long over due. The fragile child care program that exists in Canada has resulted in poor wages for child care workers, parents forced to settle for poor quality child care because they can't afford high quality, and other parents scrambling to piece together ad hoc child care arrangements because no spaces are available at any price in their community.

And amidst it all, our children, who count on us to protect and cherish them, are the losers. All of Canada's children deserve the very best start in life. Their parents deserve the right to go to work or school knowing that their children are safe and receiving high quality early childhood education and care. The future of Canada depends on the right decisions being made today.

**“Sunday Brunch with the Coalition”
May 26, 2001
UBC
10 a.m. – 12 noon**

To coincide with the ECEBC conference at UBC in Vancouver, the Coalition Board will be hosting a Sunday morning brunch get together. Coalition members and other child care advocates are invited to join us, whether you are registered for the Conference or not. Come and network with members from across the province to discuss community updates and provincial initiatives. There is no cost to participants but we must have an RSVP from you so that we can plan for enough food and coffee Call Westcoast to RSVP. We guarantee LOTS to talk about!

**Good food and stimulating conversation
What a combination!**

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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Early Childhood
Educators of BC

School Age Child
Care Association

Westcoast Child Care
Resource Centre

Western Canada Family
Child Care Association
of BC

Funding and Support
provided by:

Status of Women
Canada - BC/Yukon
Region through
Coalition of Child Care
Advocates of BC

November 23, 2001.

Premier Gordon Campbell
Minister Coell
Minister Hogg,
Minister of State Stephens
Minister of State Reid

The Child Care Advocacy Forum is a coalition of six provincial organizations representing 4,000 members and child care programs. We have been monitoring with great concern the recent announcements from the Ministry of Human Resources regarding the recent decision to change the definition of employability for single parents. Like many other organizations, we opposed these changes on many levels, not the least of which is the lack of affordability and accessibility of infant/toddler spaces in our province. As you know, your government chose not to proceed with the schedule outlined in Child Care BC that would have provided the opportunity to make infant/toddler care more affordable to parents. Those of us who have been in the child care field for many years, also realized that Child Care BC would have increased the number of infant/toddler spaces based on the financial security it would have provided to child care programs.

That said, we were heartened to hear that Minister Coell has since clarified his position. "Human Resource Minister Murray Coell said ...single parents won't be cut off social assistance unless care is available for their young children" (The Vancouver Sun, Nov. 15, 2001)

Our letter is to stress to Cabinet the importance of such decisions being made through inter-ministerial consultation. We have argued for many years that child care (that is available and affordable) is an integral component of a healthy economy. Clearly, research shows us that investing in young children through quality early childhood programs increases school readiness, positive social development and will ultimately save dollars through holistic early intervention. We strongly believe that information about and understanding how child care plays a critical role in the development of healthy communities is vital for all Cabinet Ministers when developing significant social policy. We are confident that Minister of State Stephens can provide a wealth of information to her colleagues concerning the crisis in child care. As well, we look forward to a speedy announcement of how your government will move the child care agenda forward in our province in order to best support children and families, business and education.

Once again, we urge an increase in effective inter-Ministerial communications before these kinds of policies are developed.

Sincerely,

Susan Harney
On behalf of the Child Care Advocacy Forum