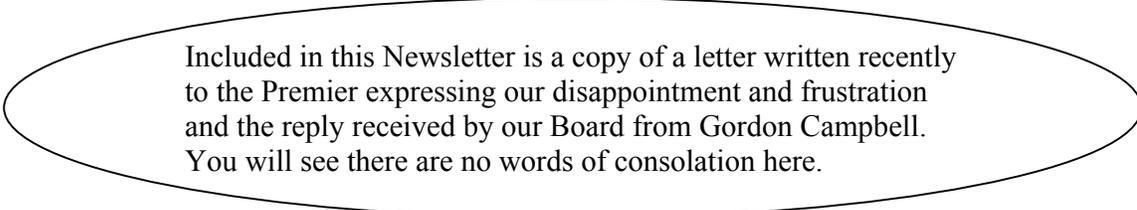


Report From the Board

April 22, 2002

With all of the doom and gloom that we are hearing about these months it is difficult to find ways to celebrate this year's Child Care Month. In past years at our centre we have found ways to involve parents, children and staff in "Caring for your Caregiver", "Celebrating Quality", "Advocating, Educating and Celebrating" but this year it's just not the same. This May we've decided to set time and emotion aside to grieve what has been taken away and to brace ourselves for the disasters that may be just around the corner. Unfortunately, I know that our centre isn't alone.

Already the cuts to subsidy have impacted parents. Our communities are losing valuable quality spaces as some child care centres make the hard decision to close their doors. And the future of the early childhood registry remains uncertain. These coupled with cuts to Health, cuts to Education, changes to pay equity, the closures of some ECE training programs, cuts to Housing and Legal Aid (as well as others) have created a climate in our province that is devastating for many children and their families. And, where government policy is being referred to by many as "just plain mean".



Included in this Newsletter is a copy of a letter written recently to the Premier expressing our disappointment and frustration and the reply received by our Board from Gordon Campbell. You will see there are no words of consolation here.

So, grieve we will – because we have lots to grieve about. And something good can come from grief – a renewed determination to make things right. It has been a long time since we have seen the collective rise in support for social justice in our province. People who have never marched in a demonstration are there on the front line; some who have never written a letter to the editor have boldly put their anger to powerful words. Polls are showing a dramatic drop in the provincial Liberal support and many British Columbians are rallying the call "I didn't vote for this!"

Hopefully May will be a month of sunshine, so that our spirits can be renewed as we join with others to oppose the devolution of what we have worked so hard to accomplish. There will be rallies to attend, letters to write, and actions of protest to organize. There will be community coalitions to build and strengthen. And there will be the children – who need us more than ever – not to give up and give in but to stand strong on their behalf. Maybe that's the true meaning of Child Care month anyway.

Susan Harney
On behalf of the Board of Directors
CCCABC

Coalition Plans Provincial Summer Strategy Session

On August 16-17, 2002, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC is hosting a provincial strategy session with advocates from across the province. The session will bring together activists from the child care and social justice movements who are committed to a publicly funded child care system that entitles all children access to quality child care.

This gathering comes at a critical time for child care in BC as children, families and child care providers experience a cross-ministerial assault on the progress that we have achieved over the last two decades. While our vision remains the same, we need to talk about how we can keep this vision alive and well.

Over the weekend, we will:

- ✓ Share information about the impact of changes in provincial child care policies
- ✓ Develop strategies to promote our child care agenda in the current climate
- ✓ Have some fun, share some laughs, renew our energy and sense of hope

Status of Women Canada has provided some funding for the session - including a contribution towards travel costs. To ensure that we have representatives from across BC, we are inviting community activists from each region and sector to join us for the weekend. If you are interested in representing your region or sector, and are committed to being a Coalition contact after the session, please contact us at 604-291-5725 or email gregson@sfu.ca.

We hope to be able to accommodate all those who are interested in attending and in doing follow up child care advocacy work. However, given our funding and planning expectations, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to meet all requests. We will post information from the session on our web site and invite all those interested to view the site frequently for information on a variety of child care advocacy topics.

It was with great pride and joy that we watched our friend and staunch child care ally graciously accept the 2002 Simon Fraser University Alumni Award for Community Service. Even more thrilling than seeing Gyda actually receive the award was the emotion of listening to an amazing speech full of powerful and compelling messages. Gyda's speech was so inspiring that the Board of the Coalition asked to share it with our members. Enjoy...

Gyda Chud Receives A Well Deserved Award

It is indeed an honour to be honoured, and I thank my dear friend and colleague Sheila Davidson and Simon Fraser University for this acknowledgement. Alongside the honour comes a deep sense of humility and self-consciousness at individual recognition for work that is very much a collective effort.

As the first of tonight's recipients, I feel I can speak for all of us when I say that these awards are most importantly an opportunity to speak, not so much about ourselves, but rather on behalf of the causes and issues we hold dear and value as a community. In the Early Childhood and Child Care world, we see our work very much as a collective where it is shared in its challenge and joys. On behalf of the Early Childhood and Child Care community three key themes resonate at this evening's celebrations.

The first is the affirmation of the role that unconditional support and modeling play in our lives. How fortunate and blessed I was in my early years to be embraced in a family where unconditional love, support and nurturing were the foundation of what my parents valued in healthy child development. Day in and out, they modeled community involvement and commitment to social justice issues. Lessons in advocacy on behalf of humanistic values and against injustice surrounded us and sustained us, as did the centrality of community service. Tonight serves as an affirmation that we all need to play a part in serving as models and exemplars for all those we touch in our family and community lives.

The second theme or stream that this evening affirms is the journey of lifelong learning – a process that has its roots in early childhood and continues throughout our life's narrative. My time as a young adult at Simon Fraser University in the faculty of education was my introduction to the value of discovery based learning, a child centered orientation to education and the role of education in building children's self-esteem, self confidence, critical thinking skills and the capacity to grow as loving, caring and compassionate human beings. While these concepts are well known and well accepted today, they were radical if not revolutionary three decades ago, and I thank SFU for planting them powerfully as philosophical tenets for working with both children and adult learners.

The third theme is the world of early childhood and childcare itself. The research is abundant, resounding and compelling – the early years' experiences set the stage for ensuring that children live productive, constructive and fulfilling lives. This is the time to offer supports and services that children and families are entitled to, in order to reach their full promise and potential. How is it then that this childcare world remains so undervalued, under respected and under resourced?

How is it that we, as a society that purports to value children as our most important resource remain without a national child care policy and program? How is it that our political leaders at all levels of government talk so boldly about commitment to the early years at the same time as we witness profound cuts to services for children and families and a dismantling of long and hard won gains in programs and supportive policies? Clearly, these realities speak to the need for all of us collectively to assume our role as advocates and to build a strong community voice that truly places children and families at the heart of our priorities and public policy.

On behalf of the Early Childhood and Child Care community, I urge all of us – alumni, friends of Simon Fraser university and members of a caring civic society to join our work, stand up and stand strong for children.... And on behalf of the Child care community a sincere THANK YOU for recognizing our work and our community tonight.

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

Working for high quality, affordable, accessible, accountable child care

3rd Floor, 210 West Broadway, Vancouver, British Columbia V5Y 3W2
tel: 604.709.5661 www.cccabc.bc.ca fax: 604.709.5662

March 25th, 2002

Premier Gordon Campbell
PO Box 9041
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Campbell,

It will come as little surprise to you that the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC is shocked and angered by your government's attack on access to quality child care for children and families in BC. We are addressing our concerns to you because of your commitment to child care in the past and because, as Premier, you are responsible for the cross-ministerial assault underway on the progress that has been achieved over the last two decades.

While there are many far-reaching consequences of government's economic and social agenda on the well-being of children and families, we would highlight just a few of the most troubling decisions which will have a negative impact on child care.

1. The Ministry of Human Resources' intention to lower the income level of single parents with children; to consider single parents 'employable' when their youngest child turns three; and to reduce and restrict access to child care subsidies is beyond comprehension. As you know, low and moderate income families cannot find or afford quality child care now. MHR's actions will drive care for poor children further underground with potentially tragic consequences. And, while we know and research affirms that targeted programs are not effective - these actions belie your own New Era commitment to target child care funds to those most in need.
2. The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services decision to "defund" Child Care Resource and Referral Programs, One Stop Access sites, and the provincial services of Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre by 2004 will dismantle the community infrastructure that the child care community has built over the last 15 years. We always believed that you supported these efforts. You publicly took pride in the accomplishments of Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre, which grew out of countless hours of voluntary labour, with strong support from the City of Vancouver. The hypocrisy of claiming to support increased community capacity while your government tears it apart is an insult to all who work tirelessly to strengthen our ability to help each other.
3. To date, the Early Years Strategy being advanced by Minister Reid is completely silent on child care. While we know that Minister Reid does not have direct responsibility for child care, government is responsible for ensuring inter ministerial cooperation. An early years strategy that ignores the developmental needs of a majority of young children who are in

some form of child care is inexcusable. Minister Reid cites the conclusions of the Cleveland/Krashinsky cost benefit study to support her strategy. It is important to note that Cleveland and Krashinsky concluded that there is a \$2 return for every \$1 invested in “providing relatively high quality licensed child care to all children aged two to five years with employed parents, as well as enriched nursery school for children cared for primarily by their parents at home.” Unless your government is prepared to move towards a program like the one assessed by Cleveland and Krashinsky – citing their research in this way is unacceptable.

Moreover, despite repeated unsuccessful attempts to get specific information about your government’s intended use of the federal Early Childhood Development funds, we can only conclude that the province intends to significantly reduce its own expenditures, while offering reduced federal funding to a limited number of selected communities and projects. This contradicts your commitment to openness and transparency and minimizes the importance of the early years research that Minister Reid espouses.

4. Finally, the cumulative effect of these and other recent decisions by government makes the Ministry of Children and Family Development’s plan to reduce the number of children in care by increasing community and family capacity to care for and protect children a hollow promise. Without access to quality, affordable child care, families will be under even greater stress. Child care is a central element of a comprehensive strategy to support families in their capacity to raise their children.

For over twenty years, the Coalition has seen it as our responsibility to inform and educate the public and decision-makers about the need for and value of regulated child care. We have worked constructively with politicians from across the political spectrum, confident that once people had the facts, progress would follow. But you already know all about the value of quality child care. And, in the past you have used our research and arguments in your political campaigns and agendas. We are at a loss to understand why you have turned your back on children now.

In recent public statements, you indicated that you will not be swayed by arguments or opposition. But, in a democracy, to be silent is to be complicit. We will not abandon our commitment to work on behalf of children – a commitment you once respected and honoured.

On behalf of children and families in BC – we are seeking an explanation of your change of heart and priorities. We would be more than willing to host a meeting with you and the child care community to hear your response. We look forward to receiving your reply.

Sincerely,

Sharon Gregson
Director, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC



April 5, 2002

Ms. Sharon Gregson, Director
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
3rd Floor, 210 West Broadway
Vancouver, B.C.
V5Y 3W2

Dear Ms. Gregson:

Thank you for your letter regarding child care initiatives.

I can assure you that we understand the importance of good, reliable, affordable and safe child care services for children and families across the province. Our goal and our focus over the past several months, has been to develop a responsible, workable long-term strategy -- something that has been lacking in our province for far too long.

As the Minister of State for Women's Equality, the Honourable Lynn Stephens, has said both in and out of the Legislature, we have done a lot of consultation and outreach on this initiative. We are reviewing and considering all of the input we have received; we are carefully examining a concept that is partnership-driven and community-focused. The discussions involve the Minister of Children and Family Development, the Honourable Gordon Hogg, the Minister of State for Early Childhood Development, the Honourable Linda Reid, and Minister Stephens. We all look forward to being able to move ahead responsibly on behalf of all families in British Columbia.

I know some of the tough decisions we have had to make have impacted many British Columbians across the province. It was clearly stated in the Throne Speech on February 12th that we are doing all we can to moderate the impact of our decisions, on British Columbians, and making every effort to mitigate the impact on women, seniors, children and those most vulnerable in our province.

I appreciate your taking the time to write. I understand your concerns and I have shared your comments with the Ministers involved in the discussions around child care. I can assure you that your input will be included in those discussions.

Sincerely,



Gordon Campbell
Premier

pc: Hon. Gordon Hogg
Hon. Lynn Stephens
Hon. Linda Reid

The Coalition is very pleased to bring you more information from outside of the Lower Mainland. With each newsletter we ask a different guest writer to share with the membership experiences and events happening in their region. We are fortunate in this issue to have Bonnie McEwen give us some perspective from the West Kootenay area.

Kootenay Kuts

The cut back in services to the West Kootenay/Boundary area has been mind blowing. We already had a huge population of people living well below the poverty level and the cuts have just made a bad situation that much harder.

In addition to many government jobs lost, there are forestry and health jobs gone as well. Five of our hospitals have lost most services and have been demoted to a community health centres with emergency and some obstetrics services remaining. Hours of service have been cut to our inland ferries and tolls would be added (to understand the impact of this imagine having to pay a toll every time you left your street and being denied access to that street for seven and half hours per day). Many of the small community schools are being closed which are devastating to these communities as they provided spaces for activities such as parenting classes, youth centres, child care centres or preschools.

The cut to BC Benefits and Child Care Subsidies are just starting to be felt. This is the first month that recipients are having to deal with the cuts so we aren't aware of the full impact yet. However we have had some indications; many child care centres and family child cares have lost enrollment due to job losses and have reported that parents are telling them that they are going to have to find more affordable child care within the next couple of months.

Where people will find more affordable child care is a mystery, most young families do not have family living close by, and their friends are working or looking for work. The Child Care Resource and Referrals (CCRR) have had an influx of people inquiring about doing child care because they have lost or are about to lose their jobs or they are single parents with a child three years old - they will be cut off BC Benefits soon. Many of these people live in very small homes or apartments or are sharing spaces with others so they could only take a couple of children, being able to make a living wage (assuming that they could find clients due to all the unemployment).

The end of the Munroe Contract in 2003 will cause another dilemma for unionized, non-profit child care centres. The funding that provided the wage lift will be gone and the fear is that wages will return to the \$8 to \$12 per hour range (or parent fees will need to be raised high enough to cover the loss of the funding, making the cost prohibitive to most families). Most family child cares in our area charge the same or even a bit more than the centres, as a result, all child care services will need to make some tough decisions about fees and the ability to stay open.

The cut of funding in 2004 for the three CCRRs and Child Care Connections (Nelson's One-Stop) will have a huge impact on our rural area. The CCRRs and CCC have provided isolated communities with services that have allowed them to open and retain child care services, and to assist the communities to provide parent education opportunities and services. The CCRRs and CCC services have also provided opportunities to bring the child care and family services together, assisting each other with training, funding and advocacy opportunities. They also provide community referrals to all child care and family services.

Though these cuts have done much to devastate communities these same communities are also coming together to deal with them. Community service agencies, health services and forestry services are coming together to address these problems. The Boundary Area has already come up with a community plan that they presented to the government. The West Kootenay Region has almost completed work on theirs. We may be down but we are not out!

Bonnie McEwen

CHILD CARE ADVOCACY FORUM
REAFFIRMS COMMON VISION AND AGENDA
March 2002

The last few months have been difficult ones for child care advocates. After the plan for publicly funded child care was repealed last summer, government's intentions were not clear. We had more questions than answers. We want to thank and acknowledge everyone who wrote, called and spoke up for families and children as we watched and waited.

Now, with the release of the provincial budget and Ministry Service Plans, the need for child care advocacy is clearer than ever. The current environment poses real challenges for advancing our vision, but we want you to know that all six organizational members of the Forum **are reaffirming our commitment to work together to advance our Common Vision and Agenda for Child Care Services in BC.**

In the short term, the Forum will focus on the following issues:

- The Ministry of Human Resources is reducing and restricting access to the child care subsidy program. We will develop specific advocacy tools once more details are known, but **contact your MLA today** to let them know what the impacts of reductions to subsidy will mean in your community. (To contact your MLA, go to www.gov.bc.ca/bcgov/popt/mlalookup/)
- The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services has defunded the BC Association of Child Care Services and will defund Child Care Resource and Referral Programs, One Stop Access Programs and the provincial services of Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre effective April 1, 2004. This will **dismantle the infrastructure** that the child care community has spent the last 15 years working so hard to build. Many of these defunded organizations and programs, including Westcoast and BCACCS, are committed to finding alternative funding sources so that they can continue on in some capacity. The Forum will work to **support affected programs and communities in our advocacy initiatives, and we ask you and your organization to do whatever possible to lend support.**
- The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services has announced that, in 2003/04, **existing child care grants will be combined into one operating grant** and will be available to a broader range of services, including family child care. Our vision includes family child care, but, stretching existing dollars more thinly won't support quality, affordability or sustainability. The Forum will **work to ensure that a new grant program moves us forward – not back.**

Advocacy on these immediate concerns, while essential is, at best, a stop gap measure. So, the Forum is reactivating its call to government to work with the community to:

**Develop and implement a 5 year plan for a comprehensive child care system
that moves child care from the current user fee system to one that is publicly funded.**

You can count on us for information, tools and advocacy strategies to help make our voices heard. And, we know we can count on you to speak up and out for child care in your communities.

Because – if not us, then who?

Summary of Changes to the Child Care Subsidy Program

As of April 1, 2002:

Families will need to meet the following Social Needs criteria for **all** child care settings including preschool:

- **Job search**
- **Training or education**
- **Referral under Child, Family and Community Services Act**
- **Employment/self employment**
- **Employability program**

Subsidy will no longer be available for:

- **Preschool** (unless you are at work, at school or involved in an approved job search)
- **Medical needs of parents**
- **Rehabilitative programs for parents**
- **Short term family crisis**
- **Special needs child except for the \$107 Support Payment.**
(For additional financial assistance under the Child Care Subsidy program, parents of special needs children must meet the criteria listed above.)

Income Test

- Net monthly income has been reduced by \$285 a month.
- The clawback for families where the monthly family income is above the exemption level will increase to 60% (formerly 50%).
- **No** subsidy will be issued if the overall eligibility for subsidy for a given family falls below \$50 per month.

Exempt Income Calculations

- In determining a family's income level, \$215 is added on to the basic exemption level for parents who are employed and earning a wage or attending school (reduced from \$500).

All current subsidy authorizations (except the ones with MCFD involvement) will be reviewed by May 17. If the authorizations expiring in June, July or August do NOT meet the new criteria, they will be cancelled as of May 31, 2002. This means some parents may not be able to give one month's notice if they have to withdraw their child from child care because they cannot afford the fee. The MHR Child Care Subsidy offices are attempting to review all authorizations before the end of April so that parents and caregivers will have one month's notice of changes.

After their file has been reviewed, families will receive one of three letters from MHR:

- Notice that their authorization is cancelled
- Notice that their authorization will be reduced
- Notice that there will be no change to their authorization.
-

For more information:

- Please call the MHR Child Care Subsidy office or contact a One Stop Access worker.
- Go to the following link: www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/PUBLICATAT/CC/CCSubsidy.htm

MAY IS CHILD CARE MONTH

Check our great new website for all the details

- May 12th** The Coalition will have a presence at the Single Mothers – Mothers Day Picnic to be held at Deer Lake in Burnaby.
- May 18th** The Coalition will also be at the 50th Anniversary of Here We Stand, a family event at the Peace Arch Park in South Surrey.
- May 24th** Early Childhood Educators proudly gather at UBC for the exciting 31st annual conference. Registration through ECEBC 604-709-6063.
- May 25th** Yes, we'll march for child care. Join us under the Coalition banner 10:15am at Victory Square in Vancouver as thousands of British Columbians send a strong message to Victoria.
- May 26th** Join us for a tasty Brunch with the Coalition. Space still available as we chat about the ups and downs of child care advocacy in BC. Register through ECEBC.

www.cccabc.bc.ca

Please put a bookmark in your web browser for this terrific new website..It has the latest news in child care advocacy, political news affecting child care, the latest campaigns from the Coalition and the Advocacy Forum, up-to-date contact lists, interesting links to provincial, national and even international government sites, child care organizations and friends of child care.

Really a worthwhile site that we work hard on, almost everyday, to update and keep you in touch with what is happening. We especially encourage members from outside the Lower Mainland to let us know about their child care events so that we can post them on this site. We will also be using the site to send out important news through our email list, so give us your email address!

A great way to stay up-to-date and involved as we continue to advocate for a non-profit child care system that is high quality, affordable, accessible, accountable and publicly funded.

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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Vancouver, BC
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1-877-361-1116
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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

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

CHANGES TO CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

What does it mean for your family?

On April 1, 2002 the BC government made cuts to child care subsidy.

Now -

- You need to earn **\$285 less a month** to qualify for a full subsidy
- You will get **no subsidy** if you qualify for **\$50 a month or less**
- You will get **no subsidy for pre-school fees** unless you are at work, at school or involved in an approved job search.

And more changes are coming.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum is very worried about how these changes will impact families, children, and child care programs in BC.

We think that government needs to hear what these cuts to the subsidy program mean for real BC families.

Let them know what this means for you by filling out the attached form.

Once you have filled it out – here's what to do:

1. Send it by mail, FAX or email to your MLA. For details on how to contact your MLA, go to www.gov.bc.ca/bcgov/popt/mlalookup/
2. Send a copy to the Murray Coell, the Minister of Human Resources at PO Box 9058, STN PROV GOVT, Victoria, BC, V8W 9E2 and Lynn Stephens, the Minister of State for Women's Equality at PO Box 9490 STN PROV GOVT, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9N7
3. Send us a copy at the FAX or address above OR ask your child care provider to send to us a copy so we can keep track of what families from across the province have told government.

**Do it today!
Let government know how
their decisions affect your family**

This is what changes to child care subsidy mean to my family

I am the parent/guardian of: *(list number and age of children)*

My child/children are in: *(check all that apply)*

- a pre-school a group child care centre
 a family child care home before and after-school group care
 before and after-school family care
Other _____

As a result of changes to the subsidy program *(check all that apply)*

- I will no longer receive a child care subsidy
- I will have to pay _____ more a month for child care
- I will have to change my child's current child care arrangement *(Explain briefly what the change will be and why)*
- I will have to change my work schedule *(Explain briefly what the change will be and why)*
- I will have to change my school or training plan *(Explain briefly what the change will be and why)*

Other impacts on my family are:

Name (print) _____ (signature) _____
Address: _____

*FAX, email or mail this to your MLA.
Find MLA contact info at www.gov.bc.ca/bcgov/popt/mlalookup/*