

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

Working for a non-profit child care system that is high quality, affordable, accessible and accountable.

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

April 24, 2003

The Honourable Lynn Stephens
Minister of State for Women's Equality
and Responsible for Child Care
Parliament Buildings, Room 322
P.O. Box 9056
Victoria, BC
V8V 9E2

Dear Minister Stephens,

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC is alarmed and concerned (but sadly not surprised) by the recent United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women's criticism of BC. As you know, earlier this year, this committee reviewed Canada's 5th Report under the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*. In their concluding comments, the Committee highlighted its concern about the disproportionately negative impact of recent BC policy and funding changes on women in general and on Aboriginal women in particular.

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC has been raising related concerns with you and your government for some time. For, while your child care policies hurt children, families and communities, they are particularly impacting 70% of BC's mothers who have young children, are in the paid labour force and require child care to meet the economic needs of their families and the vast majority of female child care providers who subsidize the child care system through low wages and poor working conditions

We have consistently pointed out the detrimental effects of your government's decisions to restrict eligibility for child care subsidies and Employment Assistance benefits for mothers and their children. We have clearly informed you that your decision to roll back wages for many early childhood educators to 1998 levels is contributing to women's poverty and unemployment. And, we have documented how your child care policies are eroding the stability, affordability and quality of child care – all of which are making it harder for women to access good care for their children so that they can attend school, seek employment and participate in the social and cultural life of their communities.

We are aware of recent correspondence to you from the B.C. CEDAW Group on this issue and can confirm the information on child care contained in that correspondence. Like this group, our motivation in sharing our concerns with you is to seek your support for policies and budget priorities that redress these setbacks.

We join a growing number of British Columbians who are asking you to respond to the United Nations Committee by undertaking a thorough and publicly accountable review of your government's policies so as to ensure that BC is fulfilling our international obligations to women and girls. The availability of quality, affordable child care that provides caregivers with the remuneration and respect they deserve, must be a central feature of such a review.

And, we continue to call on you to restore provincial child care funding to 2000/01 levels and to stop further child care related budget reductions.

We look forward to a positive response to our request and to a child care plan for BC that addresses the interdependent needs of children and the women who care for them at home and in the community.

Sincerely,

Susan Harney
Chair, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

cc. The Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier, British Columbia
The Honourable George Abbott, Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, Government of BC
The Honourable Jean Augustine, Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and Status of Women, MP Etobicoke - Lakeshore