



*Working together for a community based, non-profit child care system that is high quality, affordable, accessible, publicly funded and accountable.*

NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2008

## CHAIR REPORT, JANUARY 2008

Typically, the holiday time and the beginning of a new year provides us with the chance to reflect on the past year's work and progress – and what a year 2007 was! We came out strong in the beginning of 2007 with our “Minister Reid Resign” campaign – holding the Minister accountable for her inability to provide leadership, continued cuts to child care and what we identified as an attack on working families in BC. In our release “Equity for BC’s Working Families and their Children” we spoke out about the disparity of funding between child care and other early childhood development programs and warned that unless the Minister and her government began to address the real issues facing child care that the crisis would multiply.

And while it may not seem productive to say, “we told you so” that fact is we told them so! Our field faces a never before seen crisis in recruitment and retention of qualified, experienced staff. Parents have seen no relief or stability of their fees. And, we still see no comprehensive government plan to move us forward to build the system our children and families urgently need. Some may say that we have lost the battle, that our dreams for a comprehensive provincial and national child care program(s) are over – but I for one remain optimistic and the Coalition continues to engage and advocate as never before.

In fact there are new and hopeful developments. We continue to build new community partnerships while working closely with established social justice partners to ensure that child care remains front and centre in the political arena. Our sincere thanks to all of our partners for their collaborative spirit, financial support and for embracing our cause on behalf of children and families. In particular I would like to acknowledge the continued friendship and partnership of the BCGEU and our “Let’s Make it Happen” campaign. Together, we have “boldly gone where few have gone before” to get our messages out. As well, let me express our thanks to CUPE for their endless energy and financial support, the Canadian Federation of

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## SAY YES TO COMMUNITY-OWNED CHILD CARE!

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Dear Friends,

The crisis in BC child care has reached a boiling point. There are few if any new caregivers to be found; parents fees are sky high, wait lists are years long and quality is harder for operators to fund than ever before.

Our current governments are responsible for this crisis. They dismissed parents' concerns, ignored evidence and squandered resources that could have built a quality child care system.

Now they are using the crisis as an excuse to open the door to foreign-based child care corporations.

But, foreign owned multinationals are **not** the solution to BC's child care crisis. In fact, they pose the biggest threat yet to a community-based child care system.

In the face of this threat, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC **has concrete solutions** for building a child care system that truly meets the needs of BC children, families and communities.

1. Our **Child Care Plan** calls for provincial legislation and coordinated action to Fund the System, Expand the System, Develop the Workforce, Meet Diverse Needs and Enhance Quality.
2. Our **Costing and Accountability Model** shows that, over the next 5 years, BC can afford to provide a full or part time space for children under age 12 *and* pay qualified staff \$20 an hour plus benefits.
3. **The rEvolution of Community Controlled Child care in BC** offers an exciting vision for democratic control of a community owned child care system.

These solutions are our best defence against corporate child care. These solutions are doable. These solutions are about the heart and soul of community owned and controlled child care.

**Join the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC in saying  
NO to corporate child care  
YES to community-owned child care!**

Here's what you can do:

- Distribute and post **BC Child Care NOT FOR SALE** signs or posters wherever you can.
- Take the conversation about child care as part of healthy communities everywhere you go.
- Tell decision makers that your community is ready, able and willing to build a child care system. Tell them it's time to give communities the power, mandate, tools and resources to build the child care system we need.
- Learn about the 'threat' of corporate child care at: [www.cccabc.bc.ca/act/actions/2007/NFS](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/act/actions/2007/NFS)
- Share the Open Letter to Parents (in English and Chinese) and other materials widely.
- Learn more about our solutions at [www.cccabc.bc.ca](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca)

## NEWS FROM AROUND THE PROVINCE

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### **Child Care Update from the Cowichan Valley**

With regard to the child care situation in the Cowichan Valley region of Vancouver Island, a recent report by the organization "Social Planning Cowichan", of which Candace Spilsbury is the Chair, painted an excellent and detailed picture of the critical state of licensed child care here. The report points out that there are enough spaces to serve only 48% of the estimated 4,862 children under the age of 12 who need child care. For the estimated 1,047 children aged three and under there are only 165 licensed child care spaces available.

The situation is being worsened due to the current labour shortage and the increasing cost of housing in the region. More and more families are finding that two incomes are required in order to be able to afford a home. This is resulting in an estimated 70 to 75 percent of mothers entering the workforce. Many women are finding that the lack of adequate child care spaces is preventing them from entering the workforce.

There was a letter to the editor in one of the local Duncan papers three weeks ago, on behalf of a group called "The Cowichan Coalition of Concerned Citizens." The letter was taking our local school board to task for charging rent of only \$450 per month for rooms in schools being used by daycare operators. The letter suggested that this was a money losing proposition for the school board, and that they should be charging daycares the full going rate of commercial rents. This sort of ignorance on the part of the public as to what the school board is doing, and why, with under utilised space in our schools, does not serve to improve the situation with regard to daycare spaces in the Cowichan Valley region.

With regard to the Parkside Academy Society's child care centre in Tansor elementary school in Duncan, we operate a 3-5 program, kinder care & before & after school programs, as well as a preschool program. We have now secured the use of an additional room in Tansor, and in mid March of 2008 we will be starting an Infant-Toddler program. The main problem for us, as well as other child care facilities, is being able to find the required number of ECE staff to allow us to operate at maximum capacity.

Even harder to find are ECE staff with their Infant-Toddler Certificate. The common problem for all organizations operating child care facilities is the lack of proper government funding which would allow decent wages for child care workers, wages which would attract more people to the field of child care. That is what makes us so angry about the provincial government's plans to offer capital funding to private, for profit, daycare operators. They aren't even offering proper funding to the non-profit sector but they can offer funding to the private sector as a means of increasing the number of available child care spaces.

As we said in our letter to Premier Campbell, this sort of thing is not the wisest use of public funds.

- Ian McFarland

### **Year-end Review from Kamloops**

The child care situation in Kamloops remains in crisis as we come to the close of 2007. We began the year with a call for family and group centres to work together to re-instate the childcare funding cuts by the Ministry of Child and Family Development. We rallied, 500 childcare workers, on the steps of Kamloops City Hall on February 6, 2007. This one-day walk-out was the first of many actions taken throughout the province. From this day and continuing through this year, there has been positive change in the early childhood community working together.

We have two Infant/Toddler Capital Projects that were scheduled to open in the early fall, they are still not open for lack of qualified staff: recruitment and retention being the main issue.

At community meetings we applauded the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Children and Family Development for raising the entry level wage for educators (\$20-\$25/hour) to provide non-working families with universal early learning experiences. We have asked for, but to date have not received government's plan for raising and sustaining entry level wages for childcare positions in group and family programs for British Columbia's working families.

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Chair Report

Students, the BC Teachers' Federation, the Child Care Advocacy Forum, and our brothers and sisters across the country from the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and the Code Blue campaign.

In the fall, it was us who broke wide open the threat of "big box child care" coming to Canada, raising the awareness of issues of quality and what can happen when governments stand by and do nothing. Our most recent and pivotal publication "The rEvolution of Community Controlled Child Care in BC" (which is included in your newsletter package) provides our vision with concrete steps for the future, acknowledging the dedication and wisdom found in communities across BC. 2008 will see us expanding this report with further dialogue, campaigns and action as we demonstrate that it IS possible to create a comprehensive, sustainable system of child care that meet the needs of families and child care providers IF the political will is there.

I do wish that 2007 had been the year that politicians decided to listen to the majority of Canadians who identify child care and the creation of a child care system in Canada as a top priority. But I am heartened when I listen to researchers and analysts who talk about the importance of child care in moving our country forward in areas of economics, education, social development and women's equality. Our message has been right all along and it has been heard. We will continue to hold our politicians accountable and to get our message out to an even broader base of citizens.

So while many of us continue to face the day-to-day crisis, try to manage programs without proper funding or staff, and sometimes wonder how we can possibly do this one more time – remember that together we are strong. We have maintained our organization where others have been unable to stand up to the provincial and federal governments. We have been able to build and sustain partnerships, to provide a voice for our members and to provide real analysis and real solutions to the crisis created by governments. Let us find strength in the faces of the children who fill our days – and in each other. Here's to a new year filled with more advocacy than we can even imagine!!!!

- Susan Harney

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Year-end Review from Kamloops

Here in Kamloops we look forward to sharing the Coalition's Governance Project ideas as we continue to listen how boards of directors in our community struggle to raise or not raise parent fees in order to increase staff wages and benefits. As one centre raises fees and wages, what if another centre raises and then another surpasses that raise? As of last week this has started to happen: a race to what end? Add to the mix the foreign ownership issue. Yes, we are in a state of uncertainty.

Although we are looking forward to February 6, 2008, and wondering how we should we celebrate the anniversary of our 2007 walk-out?

Our year-end in review from Kamloops.

- Vi-Anne Zirnhelt

#### **Letter from a Fernwood Parent**

We are both working parents of an 18 months old girl. After one year on waiting lists at day care centers all over town, we have finally managed to get a spot for our daughter in the Fernwood Community Centre Toddler and Day Care Centre in the City of Victoria. After the increase in fees to now just under \$1000 a month (which is double the average fee in Europe or Quebec), we are now facing the potential closure of the Toddler Care Centre, as the Centre has problems attracting trained staff, due to the general decrease in training participation rates for day care workers.

While those trained educators are usually paid \$15/hour, career nannies are getting head hunted by high income families and spa packages, trips to Mexico and hourly rates of \$20 are the norm of a working contract. This is a very schizophrenic situation that a non-profit day care centre is facing potential closure while a new market of high paid nannies is evolving all due to the day care politics of funding cuts in this province. 30 children under 3 years of age, 60 working parents, 50 employers and 1000's of clients would be affected by the closure of the one Fernwood Day Care Centre.

- Heike Schmidt  
Craig Fulton, Mia Fulton