



Municipal Council Lobby Kit

A joint campaign of the
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C.
and
B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union

Child Care Campaign - Municipal Lobby (2006)

SPEAKER'S NOTES

The following information has been developed to assist you in your presentation to your local municipal council. Your goal is to gain their support in pressuring our MLAs and MPs to commit to work for the reinstatement of the federal child care funding, as promised in the 2005 federal-provincial agreements.

How to get on the agenda for your local municipal council meeting:

- **See the Municipal Contacts list in this kit and contact your local council.**
- Most municipal councils allow about 10 min. for presentations, followed by a 5 minute question period.
- Ask your municipal council what their format will be, so you can be prepared.

Preparation tips:

In preparing your presentation you may want to consider the following:

If possible, your presentation should **focus on an issue or a story you have experienced first hand** personally, or through your family, friends, neighbours, your work, your volunteer roles etc. Make sure your facts are correct! Ensure you are credible. Don't say things you can't prove.

Give a context for your comments. Describe how B.C. child care has already suffered significant cuts. This federal funding is critical for those parents currently on waiting lists for affordable child care in this community. These parents may include you, your neighbours, your friends or your family. **Quality, affordable, accessible child care is needed in this community.**

Remember that you are not able to use the names of other people (parents, children, clients) if you are relating a story, as that would be a breach of confidentiality. Please speak only in generalities when you are speaking about others' experiences.

Relax. Your municipal council will be patient and considerate of you during your presentation. Focus on what you know. You are not expected to be an expert. Look board members in the eye. Be confident in the power of your message.

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1) Introduction:

Introduce yourself by describing your ties to the school district/community you are speaking in.

Identify if you are a member of the community, a parent and/or grandparent, a volunteer for community organizations, or if you hold any formal community roles. Also explain your work background, if applicable to the subject.

By capturing your full community, family and work roles the municipal council will be able to understand more about who you are in a broad context. This will strengthen the value of your message.

2) Presentation focus:

- ✓ The federal child care funding as promised in the 2005 federal-provincial agreements must be reinstated.
- ✓ Child care funding received by provinces must be dedicated to child care.
- ✓ B.C. needs to restore and commit more provincial funding to child care.
- ✓ **Quality, affordable, accessible child care is needed in this community.**

3) How municipal councils can help:

1. By passing the resolutions and,
2. By sending a copy of the resolution(s), when passed, to:
 - Prime Minister Stephen Harper
 - Federal Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Diane Finley
 - Premier Gordon Campbell
 - Provincial Minister of State for Child Care Linda Reid
 - Provincial Minister of Child and Family Development Stan Hagen
 - The local MLA and MP seeking her/his support for the resolution
 - And, by providing our child care campaign with a copy of municipal council letters.

Provide support for your request by stating that Vancouver Municipal council has already passed this resolution on March 2, 2006.

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4) Presentation outline:

B.C. is in serious need of child care funding:

There are not enough affordable child care spaces in B.C.

- It is not uncommon for parents to sign up on long wait lists at more than one child care centre as soon as they become pregnant. After the child is born and they really need child care, they are often faced with the reality that there are still no available spaces.

Even in this context, the B.C. government:

- cut child care spending by \$40 million annually since 2002.
- and drastically cut the wages and benefits of quality child care workers in B.C. (some of whom agreed to have their wages and benefits cut severely just to keep their centres open).

Federal child care funding

- In 2005, the federal government committed \$5 billion dollars over the next five years to build a national child care system and signed agreements with the provinces to confirm this commitment.
- The intended national child care system is based on the QUAD principles supported by child care research and advocates across Canada. These principles are: Quality, Universally inclusive, Accessible, and Developmental child care.
- In January 2006, the federal Conservatives were elected as a new minority government. They soon announced they would not honour the signed federal-provincial child care funding agreements.
- They intend to cut the national child care funding in early 2007 and will implement a taxable family allowance of \$1200/year (only for every child under 6) that parents can 'choose' to use for child care.
- While any contribution to support Canadian families is welcome, parents know that this taxable family allowance does not come close to covering the real cost of child care.
- Because the new family allowance is taxable, it amounts to significantly less than \$100/month per child and does not address after-school care for children 6 and older.
- It is important to understand that the taxable family allowance does nothing to create the child care spaces that are so desperately needed.

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Why is the B.C. government silent on child care?

- The BC government was supposed to develop a *Child Care Action Plan* based on the feedback from “consultation” meetings last November, and issue the plan in January 2006.
- To date, they have not put forward their *Child Care Action Plan*, and they have been silent about the federal Conservatives’ decision to not honour the federal child care funding agreement with B.C.
- In fact, the B.C. government did not even mention child care in their February 2006 Throne Speech.
- Other provinces have spoken out against the Conservatives’ decision on child care, including Ontario Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Quebec.
- This is no time for the B.C. government to be silent.

What do we stand to lose in B.C.?

- The national initiative would have provided \$455 million for additional child care spaces, over the remaining three years of the agreement.
- All recent increases in child care spending in BC have been paid for with federal child care funds. This includes increases to the Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) that many child care centres rely on to: keep their doors open, keep parent fees affordable, subsidize child care workers wages, upgrade equipment and facilities to ensure child safety
- Unless the province is prepared to pick up the costs, child care centres will have to make up the difference by:
 - Raising parent fees
 - Laying off workers
 - Cutting programs
 - Closing their doors
- If the federal child care funding is eliminated by the Conservatives in 2007, we will lose even more child care spaces and services.
- This is why it is so important to act now. We must put pressure on our MLAs to ensure the provincial government takes action in the interest of B.C. children. We must also pressure our MPs to ensure they commit to working for the reinstatement of the federal child care funding.

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B.C. municipal councils may find the following reference useful when creating their own resolutions on child care.

On March 2, 2006, the Vancouver City Council passed this resolution in support of the restoration of federal child care funding:

WHEREAS the City of Vancouver has a long tradition of providing leadership in the development and support of licensed, non-profit childcare;

AND WHEREAS, the previous federal government committed almost \$5 billion over 5 years to establish a national childcare program, of which \$633 million was to come to BC;

AND WHEREAS, the current federal government promised to rip up these agreements in March of 2007;

AND WHEREAS the current federal government is replacing the national childcare plan with individual payments to families with children that are in fact taxable family bonuses and will do nothing to further develop a national childcare program;

AND WHEREAS the suggested bonus of \$1200 a year will cover just over one month's cost for children under 18 months;

AND WHEREAS there is a lack of facilities for younger children, including those with parents who can afford to pay for child care;

AND WHEREAS the provincial government has been slow to raise opposition to this plan, despite very public concern expressed by other provinces, families and the childcare community;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Vancouver write a letter to the federal government urging that they maintain their commitment to the Federal Early Learning and Childcare Agreement;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Vancouver write a letter to the province encouraging them to be more proactive in opposing the elimination of a national childcare program.

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(handout)

How B.C. municipal councils can help support quality child care:

We are seeking the support of municipal councils across the province to support child care advocates in our attempt to stop child care funding from being cut by the federal government, and to encourage the B.C. government to restore funding and commit new monies to child care.

We ask you and your council to pass a resolution like the one passed by the Vancouver Municipal council on March 2, 2006 (*supporting the reinstatement of the full five year federal child care funding plan*).

We are asking municipal councils to send a copy of their resolutions to:

- Prime Minister Stephen Harper
- Federal Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Diane Finley
- Premier Gordon Campbell
- Provincial Minister of State for Child Care Linda Reid
- Provincial Minister of Child and Family Development Stan Hagen
- The local MP and MLA.

Thank you for your support!

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What is quality child care?

All of the research indicates that to ensure sustainable gains for children, parents and the public, early childhood care and early learning must be of “high quality.” Studies have described the elements of quality child care that give us these positive results as:

- licensed, non-profit and government regulated programs with stable funding
- high adult to child ratios
- small group sizes
- stable consistent child care staff
- caregivers trained in early childhood education
- adequate health, safety and physical environment precautions
- good wages and working conditions for staff and good workplace morale

Quality child care means a better future for our children and community

Research indicates that the type of care received during a child’s early years influences their emotional, social, intellectual and physical health in later years. Quality child care can significantly improve a child’s educational experience.

Numerous studies have shown that high quality child care results in:

- ✓ early identification of special needs;
- ✓ improved development and academic achievement;
- ✓ more social skills and less problem behaviours;
- ✓ higher likelihood of completing high school and higher education;
- ✓ higher likelihood of being gainfully employed as adults;
- ✓ less likelihood of committing crimes;
- ✓ less likelihood of requiring public assistance.

Economic benefits of quality child care

Quality child care provides generations of benefits to the community at large.

- A University of Toronto study in 1998 showed that spending on early learning and child care programs is a social investment that returns \$2 for every \$1 invested.
- Research has established that children who receive high quality child care need less public funds for employment, education, and social programs.
- Providing quality child care also increases the commitment of mothers to the labour force, which leads to increased long-term economic security for women, and greater tax revenues for government.
- The Vancouver Board of Trade supports publicly funded child care for its economic benefits.

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The child care situation in Canada is urgent!

- In 2005, the federal government committed \$5 billion to be spent over the next five years to build a national child care system, and signed agreements with the provinces to confirm this commitment.
- In January 2006, the federal Conservatives were elected as a new minority government. They soon announced they would not honour the signed federal-provincial child care funding agreements.
- They intend to cut the federal child care funding in early 2007, and will implement a taxable family allowance of \$1200/year (only for every child under 6) that parents can choose to use for child care.
- While any contribution to support families is welcome, parents know this taxable allowance does not come close to covering the real cost of child care.
- Because the allowance is taxable, it amounts to less than \$100/month per child and does not address after-school care for children 6 and older.
- It is important to understand that this taxable family allowance does nothing to create the child care spaces that are so desperately needed.

What do we stand to lose in B.C.?

The B.C. government has made significant cuts to child care in recent years:

- cut child care spending by \$40 million annually since 2002.
- and drastically cut the wages and benefits of quality child care workers, (some of whom agreed to have their wages and benefits cut severely, just to keep their centres open.)
- The national initiative would have provided \$455 million for additional child care spaces over the remaining three years. This is what B.C. stands to lose.
- All recent increases in child care spending in B.C. have been paid for with federal child care funds. This includes increases to the Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) that many child care centres rely on to: keep their doors open, keep parent fees affordable, subsidize child care workers wages, upgrade equipment and facilities to ensure child safety
- Unless the province is prepared to pick up the costs, child care centres will have to make up the difference by:
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The time to act is now!

With the loss of federal child care funding in early 2007, the closure of many B.C. child care centres is inevitable. We need to urge our MLAs and the provincial government to stand up and speak out to ensure this federal commitment is followed through with, and to commit itself to increased child care funding. We must also pressure our MPs to ensure they commit to working for the reinstatement of federal child care funding.

A resolution from this municipal council will strengthen our collective voice on this important issue. Thank you for your support.

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