

Cuts will hit families hard [CA-BC] ^[1]

Letter to the Editor

Author: Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

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See text below.

To the editor,

An open letter to Minister Linda Reid,

Dear Minister Reid,

July 1, 2007, the day on which your government will cut Child Care Operating Funds (CCOF) for licenced family and group child care programs across B.C. is upon us. We are hearing from our community across B.C. about families facing impossible choices, caregivers despairing after years of dedicated service and organizations unable to yet again find a way to make do.

There are no organizational reserves or cost savings to cover the loss of CCOF. The child care community is already under-funded and reeling from years of instability. The sector is in the midst of a human resource crisis as current wages are too low to recruit and maintain quality early childhood educators.

So, as advised by you, child care fees across B.C. are going up. For infant/toddler care, increases of \$75 a month are needed just to cover CCOF cuts let alone improve wages or meet other escalating operating costs. Total monthly fees for children under three could now be over \$1,000. More families will have no choice but to remove their children from licenced care and scramble to find alternatives. Other families will have to leave the labour force or reduce their working hours deepening B.C.'s growing labour shortage and ongoing concerns about family poverty. Children, families and the whole community will pay the cost for years to come.

...

As devastating as these realities are for individual families and communities, the real tragedy is that the July 1 cuts to CCOF are totally unnecessary.

You blame the cuts on the loss of dedicated federal child care transfer payments saying that you had no choice but to spend \$95 million in remaining federal child care funds on one-time-only grants rather than ongoing funding for CCOF. But B.C.'s outgoing Acting Auditor General and the current Comptroller General have both publicly confirmed that the province has the ability to make decisions about child care spending this year and beyond. It is revealing that B.C. is the only province to cut ongoing child care funds while engaging in a flurry of unaccountable year-end spending in response to the reduction in dedicated federal funds.

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The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

- reprinted from the Daily News (Prince Rupert)

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