

## **Presentation for the Coalition of Child Care Advocates and BCGEU Press Conference February 5, 2007**

**As President of the early childhood educators of BC, I will be sharing with you this morning, the stories that I have been hearing from early childhood educators from all over the province. Other members of this panel will describe the specific cuts to the childcare and childcare resource and referral programs, the impacts to families, to communities and especially to the children.**

**People working in child care centers are very distressed – I have never seen our workforce more demoralized as they struggle to understand the decision Premier Campbell, Finance Minister Carol Taylor, Tom Christensen, The Minister of Children and Family Development and Minister of State for Child Care, Linda Reid, have made to brutally cut funding to the child care sector.**

**It is important to realize that the Child Care system in BC has been in crisis in the past year, with long waiting lists for parents, too few spaces and not enough trained staff. In the community of Kamloops alone, there are 2800 children on waiting lists for childcare programs.**

**It has been difficult for caregivers to respond to parents, businesses, and communities so desperate for childcare. Parents have had to give up jobs, students have had to quit training programs and interrupt their education and employers have experienced difficulty in hiring or keeping employees due to a lack of childcare.**

**The stress has been significant to everyone and in the midst of this, a decision has been made to decrease the support and throw the whole system into chaos and instability.**

**In the childcare field, we work in partnership with parents and over many years have done everything to keep parent fees as low as possible, including trying to survive on very low wages! The average wage of an ECE in BC is approx. \$13 an hour and most organizations are not able to provide additional benefits. This is a shameful wage for the amount of education and responsibility required in the early childhood field.... And, these government cuts are incomprehensible to a workforce already cut to the bone.**

**ECE's have reached the end of their ability to prop up a fragmented system with no support or valuing of the important service they provide.**

**I have heard program administrators say that they refuse to lower wages again in response to these deep cuts. They are forced to either raise parent fees or close their doors. We are losing valuable, experienced and educated staff, who are looking at other careers that would provide more stability. This must stop!!**

**Research has been done that looks at the effects of child care on young children and the results show that children in quality early learning and childcare programs, benefit in all areas of their development, including social, intellectual, physical, language, creative and emotional.**

**Premier Campbell has said he wants the most literate province in the country and yet he allows his government to cut the strongest possible foundation for these skills.**

**This government has the research and the information about the value and necessity of a quality childcare system for healthy children, a healthy economy, and thriving communities - yet they are making decisions to destabilize childcare – one is left to come to the only logical conclusion – this is the outcome they desire. BC’s childcare system is as simple as ABC – anything but childcare!**

**Minister of State for Child Care, Linda Reid, states that these cuts are due to the end of federal funding for early learning and childcare. In 2002, this government cut \$50 million from its own childcare budget and backfilled this with federal money. This *provincial* money has never been restored.**

**As a member of the Canadian Childcare Federation I recently participated in a cross Canada report out – BC is the only province in the country of Canada that has responded to the federal cuts with announcements of cuts to the childcare sector.**

**BC now has a healthy economy and a \$2 billion surplus -  
We are now asking this government to show its commitment and support to early learning and child care by restoring the funding cuts and developing a comprehensive and stable plan for childcare and early learning.**

**We encourage all those in support of early childhood programs, childcare centers, preschools, family childcare programs, childcare resource and referral agencies, and family place programs to name a few, to come together on February 13<sup>th</sup> and let government know that our children deserve better.**

**This is not a labour issue or an action against employers – it is a response to the cuts in funding that will impact everyone.**

**There will be a rally on the steps of the legislature in Victoria starting at 12:30 (buses will be leaving from Vancouver at 7:30 – contact [ecebc@direct.ca](mailto:ecebc@direct.ca) if you wish a seat) and many communities are holding rallies. Join us!**

**Toni Hoyland**