



January 12, 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GOT AN EXTRA \$7,944 TO PAY FOR CHILD CARE THIS YEAR?

The poster shows a little girl shaking her piggy bank, but the real challenge is not finding a few nickels and dimes. It's finding an extra \$7,944 so her parents can enroll her in child care this year.

That's the hard, cold, dollars-and-cents reality facing many parents in British Columbia. The average cost of all-day care for a toddler in a BC child care centre was \$7,944 at last report. A few parents with very low incomes may get some of the costs covered by subsidies from the provincial government, but most parents have to dig deep in their pockets and pay for child care on their own.

Elected officials in Quebec and in most European countries have been much more responsive to the recognized needs of their parents and children. First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, believes parents and children in British Columbia deserve the same public policy supports.

The poster puts it this way: "Families deserve access to high-quality, affordable child care. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the importance of child care. Tell your MLA that Canadian parents won't settle for less."

Child care has been on and off the front burner of the public agenda in Canada for more than a generation and remains the one big gaping hole in Canadian social programs. With over 80% of women with children under the age of 6 in the workforce and (while no similar information is collected for men) over 90 % of men between the ages of 25 and 50 are in the workforce, it is an issue that directly affects our economy and our social well-being. In November 2004, social services ministers from the federal, provincial and territorial governments agreed on the principles to guide the development of a new national child care system. The ministers agreed to continue their work early in 2005 in hopes of getting more financing in place for the 2005-06 fiscal year.

It remains to be seen, however, whether these efforts will lead in short order to a universally accessible, publicly funded system of high-quality care or whether the results will be mostly piecemeal programs that force parents to keep on raiding the piggy bank or watching their children grow up on waiting lists for the few spaces available.

The poster is the third in the public awareness campaign known as "Everyone Counts." The campaign was begun last year by First Call with the help and support of the BC Government and Service Employees' Union and the BC Teachers' Federation.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

First Call

604-875-3629

**EVERYONE COUNTS –
AND FOR MANY BC FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN THE COUNTING MUST
BE DONE VERY CAREFULLY!**

For young families affordability is one of the major barriers to providing their children with high quality regulated full day or part day child care. In fact child care is often similar to shelter in the monthly expenditures made by young families in Canada. What is the picture like for BC families?

Who is the little girl in our poster? We know that she is a toddler and that it costs almost \$8000 a year for her to attend a child care centre full-time. While different families can have different child care needs, one problem is that the options are too expensive for many families. Here are four possible scenarios that explain why. Each scenario includes a 2 year old child.

	Four Sample Family Budgets			
	The Pumpkins	The Peppers	The Parsleys	The Pickles
Monthly	2 parents 2 incomes 2 children Age 2 and 4	1 parent 1 income 2 children Age 2 and 4	2 parents 1 income 2 children Age 2 and 4	1 parent 1 income 1 child Age 2
Net Income ¹	\$5000	\$3000	\$1700	\$1600
Shelter² (excluding utilities)	1081	1081	855	855
Food³	513	319	513	216
Mean Monthly Fees – full day centre care^{4 5}	1156	1156		662
Mean monthly fees –licensed preschool⁶			185	
Child Care Subsidy⁷	(0)	(344)	(182)	(553)
Funds available for other monthly expenses	\$2,250	\$788	\$329	\$420
% of net income for child care (after subsidy)	23%	27%	n/a	6%

The Pumpkin Family: In this family our toddler has a four year old brother and both are enrolled full-time in licensed child care centres as their parents are in the paid labour force. Their father earns approximately \$60,000 a year and her mother earns approximately \$24,000 a year. For the purpose of this scenario we have estimated the family’s net monthly income to be \$5000. Child care and shelter costs are similar for this family. ***Annual child care costs for this family are estimated at \$13,872 and use 23% of the monthly budget.***

The Pepper Family: In this family the children are also two and four and enrolled in child care centres full-time. Their mother is a sole parent earning the average weekly wage in BC which in November 2004 was \$701⁸. Her annual income is approximately \$36,000 and we have estimated her net monthly income to be \$3000. ***Annual child care costs for this mother are estimated at \$9744 and use 27% of the monthly budget***

The Parsley Family: In this family the two young children live with their parents only one of whom is in the paid labour force. They do not need full time child care but the parents want both children to attend part day preschool: our poster girl for two mornings a week and her brother for three mornings a week.

¹ Net incomes are roughly estimated for the purpose of illustration.

² Tables 1 and 2, *The Cost of Eating in BC – the challenge of feeding a family on a low income* www.dietitians.ca

³ Ibid

⁴ *Mean Monthly Fees Licensed Child Care Centre \$662 for 2yr old: \$494 for 4yr old.*

Table C20 Mean Monthly Fees (\$) by Type of Care, by Health Region 2001 *Provincial Child Care Survey Report* www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/ChildCar/research2001.htm

⁵ Ibid. *It should be noted that the mean monthly fees for regulated family child care for a two year old and a four year old are similar to those for centre care in fact they are slightly higher at \$1187.*

⁶ Ibid. *Licensed Preschool Fee (\$78 for 2 times/wk; \$107 for 3 times/wk*

⁷ Calculated using the on-line BC Child Care Subsidy Estimator www.childcareestimator.gov.bc.ca/default.asp

⁸ www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca which is based on net monthly income.

The earner in this family works 40 hours per week at \$11 an hour earning \$22,880 per year. We have estimated this family's net monthly income to be \$1500.

Even though this family is eligible to have almost all their preschool costs subsidized they may not be able to access this benefit.. There is no leeway in their budget for things like transportation costs to and from preschool, field trip costs, extra snacks, etc.

The Pickle Family: In this family our toddler lives with her mother, a single parent earning approximately \$24,000 a year working full time as an early childhood educator in a child care centre for children aged three to five⁹. According to the most recent Provincial Child Care Survey Report in 2001 a certified early childhood educator earned a mean hourly wage of \$13.63 at 32.8 mean hours per week. For the purpose of our scenario her net monthly income has been estimated at \$1400.

The story of this family illustrates another side of child care. Those who work in the sector may not be able to afford licensed child care for their own children. They need a second source of income or must make another career choice.¹⁰

This poster campaign focuses on affordability ... just one of the issues faced by families seeking child care. Availability and quality are other serious considerations that must be addressed. Early in 2005, federal, provincial and territorial ministers will meet to forge a national child care system. Parents and child care communities urge governments to get the foundations of the new system right from the start:

- **A publicly funded, sustainable system** for quality child care parents can count on and afford. Government provides most of the funding directly to programs, giving them a stable operating base. (In Quebec, for example, parents pay a maximum \$7 a day and government pays the rest.)
- **A Child Care Act** that guarantees standards and the principles of *quality, universality, accessibility, developmental programming* and *inclusiveness*.
- **Public accountability** tied to provincial and territorial five-year plans that contain goals, timelines and targets, and a way to measure real progress in developing comprehensive family- and centre-based child care services.
- **In the future every public dollar goes directly into services for children.** Services should be expanded in the non-profit sector, with a transition plan developed for existing commercial centres.

These building blocks are tested and solid. They come out of 30 years of collective experience, research and practice in early learning and care—in Quebec, Canada and around the world.

For more information check out the following links:

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada www.childcareadvocacy.ca

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC www.cccabc.bc.ca

Child Care Advocacy Forum www.advocacyforum.bc.ca

Child Care Resource and Research Unit www.childcarecanada.org

YWCA Vancouver www.ywcavan.org

⁹ Table C57 Mean and Median Hourly Wage and Number of Paid Hours per Week, by Type of Care. 2001 Provincial Child Care Survey Report www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/ChildCar/research2001.htm

¹⁰ See also Child Care Human Resources Sector Council www.ccscc-cssge.ca