

Media Release

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Harper's cut and run approach hurting families

It's time for the Harper government to publicly face the truth – they're hurting Canada's families by failing to deliver on early learning and child care. Although they said child care was one of their top priorities in the last election, today's budget confirms federal child care funding cuts of almost a billion dollars (80%). The announcement of a measly \$250 million transfer to provinces and territories with no accountability framework shows that they do not have a plan for delivering the national child care program that Canadians want.

"The Harper Conservatives confirmed their inability to act with integrity," Monica Lysack, executive director of the CCAAC said after hearing the bad news for families in today's budget. "Canadians expect leadership from the federal government. This cut and run approach – cut the cheques and run from responsibility – clearly indicates that this government's idea of helping families is to hand out cash like an ATM machine. Last year they cut cheques to families; this year they're cutting cheques to provinces and territories. Handing out public dollars with no accountability and nothing to show in return is not the kind of public policy that families need. Canada's families – especially the children – are paying the price for this lack of leadership."

A year ago, when the Conservative government announced that in 2007 its tax credit plan to create 25,000 spaces would replace transfers to provinces for early learning and child care spaces, they threw cold water on significant provincial and territorial plans to expand access to quality, affordable spaces themselves. The first to feel the impact are children and families in BC, one of Canada's wealthiest provinces. Blaming the federal government for their actions, BC has stopped funding for new spaces and is cutting funding to existing programs, promoting increased parent fees as the solution. "The federal and provincial cuts to child care in BC have thrown communities into turmoil" says Susan Harney, BC Director of the CCAAC. "Unless the 2007 federal budget is amended to fully restore the child care funding commitment of \$1.2 billion, the hurting in BC will continue and we will see similar results across the country."

Jody Dallaire, chair of the CCAAC says, "The Tories have spent the last year pretending that a hundred bucks and a few tax credits would do the trick for early learning and child care. Now they're pretending that a hundred bucks and less than a quarter of the transfer payments promised in 2005 by the previous government will make up for their multibillion multiyear cut". The result of their failure has meant more families on waitlists across the country, and more young children missing out on early learning opportunities in their communities.

"It's not too late for the federal government to show some leadership on child care," says Lysack. The CCAAC has a doable, accountable plan for meeting the needs of children and their families - developed by listening to Canadians. Instead of abdicating responsibility, the federal government must reverse the cuts to early learning and child care to ensure that all families in Canada have access to quality, universal early learning and child care programs.

- 30 -

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