

# the **r**EVOLUTION

of

## community controlled child care in BC



## COALITION OF CHILD CARE ADVOCATES OF BC

FINAL REPORT OF THE CHILD CARE GOVERNANCE PROJECT

NOVEMBER 2007

Funding for this project was provided by VanCity Community Foundation

The project was undertaken in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – BC Office

For many years the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) has advocated for a community-based, publicly funded, non-profit comprehensive child care system.

We knew that child care needed to be planned, developed and delivered at the community level – with adequate and stable public funding and supportive policy. We knew that it needed to respond to families’ diverse needs with a range of services including full and part-time, in-centre and family-based settings. And, we knew that it needed to be democratically governed by and for communities. In other words – **community owned and controlled.**

But, beyond a broad goal, CCCABC did not have detailed answers to the question “What do you mean by community-controlled child care?” So, in 2006, with the promise of significant new federal investments in child care on the table, it was time to explore how to move from a patchwork of services to accountable community-based governance of an emerging child care system.

With funds from VanCity Community Foundation and in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC Office we began our **Child Care Governance Project.**

Working with a Project Reference Group from across the province, we began by identifying the key elements of the child care system we advocate for. These became the lens through which we examined the strengths and weaknesses of five different governance models. We then consulted with the community about these models and the emerging lessons for BC. (The working documents from these phases of the project are available on line at: [www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabdocs/governance.html](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabdocs/governance.html))

Finally, we reflected on the lessons learned and developed the concrete options and proposals outlined in this project report.

Over the course of the project, things changed. The federal government cancelled the expected federal investments in child care and BC responded with more cuts to child care services.

A new provincial direction now allows public funding for privately-owned child care assets. This makes the threat of big box child care chains in BC a clear and present danger.

Old and tired approaches that rely on supply and demand market solutions have failed. Fees are up, wages are down and wait lists are growing.

In the face of this crisis, communities are taking up the challenge to meet the needs of children and families and to advocate for change. Their efforts inspired the main lesson of this project. **It’s time to give communities the power, mandate, resources and tools they need to build and govern a child care system.**

This report, for which CCCABC takes full responsibility, is dedicated to communities’ knowledge, experience and commitment. Let’s work together to make sure they have the tools to get the job done.

The conversation about the rEvolution of community-controlled child care is more important now than ever. We invite you to join us in building the solution.



## LET'S IMAGINE

Close your eyes for a moment and imagine your community. Think about public spaces and places that you and others use – the library, the school, the park, the stop lights and the recreation centre.

No doubt there are things about each of these services that could be better. Probably each one would benefit from more funds or better access. But, while none of these services are perfect, they do exist and when they aren't there or when they are inadequate we expect action. Why is that?

Well, for starters, at some point we agreed that these services should be funded and provided collectively. For example, when we realized it was in everyone's interest that we all have access to books, we didn't give everyone an annual voucher to go buy their own. Rather, we agreed that public access to books (and now many other forms of information) could best be met collectively. We allocated a portion of the funds that we all contribute through taxes to build and run libraries.

But we didn't stop there. We set out to deliver on the promise of access in an organized way. We didn't leave it up to willing groups of readers to build their own library. We didn't allow libraries to be built right next to each other rather than where they were most needed. And, we didn't base the funding of libraries on how many people borrowed books that month. Rather, we gave responsibility and resources for planning, building, running and improving libraries to an accountable group.

In short, once we agreed that libraries and other services were essential for communities, we:

1. Enacted **public policy to ensure these services exist**.  
*Sometimes, laws entitle everyone access to a service, like public schools. Other times, laws don't state that a service must exist, but rather that their existence is possible and legitimate.*
2. Allocated **stable capital and operating funds** to build and run these services.  
*No one expects community services to rely on user fees to cover most of their costs. Affordability is a given. While funds may be inadequate, there is an annual budget, and over time, budgets meet unmet needs. We can also be confident that we, the public, will own the services we have paid for and that they will remain a community asset for the long term.*
3. Agreed on **principles to ensure quality, access and safety** of these services.  
*Community services meet human rights requirements that prohibit discrimination against marginalized groups and there are continuous efforts to enhance access for various groups. Further, community services meet various health, safety and service quality requirements.*
4. Mandated **accountable governing bodies to make decisions** about these services.  
*In one way or another, these governing bodies are accountable to communities. Sometimes, as with School Boards, they are elected. Other times, they are appointed by more senior levels of government. In either case there is a level of community ownership and control.*

These are the building blocks of the **systems** that make most community services possible.



Now, imagine child care as part of this picture. Close your eyes again but, this time, imagine child care centres, family child care homes and pre-schools as a ‘normal and expected’ part of the community. Imagine that just like libraries, members of your community can expect that the child care they need will be there for them. Imagine that child care, while not perfect, has a stable funding base that supports quality. And, imagine that if these conditions aren’t being met, community members know where to go for answers. In short – imagine **an accountable governing body in your community with the mandate, power and resources to develop and deliver child care.**

This report sets out to explore the ‘governance’ of the child care system we seek. It imagines that Canada has joined almost all other developed countries and enacted policy to ensure child care exists. It imagines that child care receives a fair share of the public budget and that as a society we agree on the guiding principles for an inclusive, high quality system. It imagines that we really are on the road to building a child care system.

It takes the bold step of exploring what **good governance of community-based child care** could look like if communities were given the power, mandate, resources and responsibility to do the job.

## LOOKING BACK – JUST A LITTLE BIT

In 2005, when the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) began this project, we anticipated significant new public investments in child care. That year, the provincial and federal government signed an Agreement in Principle on Early Learning and Child Care. Under this Agreement, BC was to receive over \$630 million from the federal government over five years to begin building a child care system in BC.

With significant growth and expansion on the agenda, effective planning and good governance were essential to make sure that public investments met community needs and built community services that we would all be proud of.

Regrettably, after two years, a new federal government cancelled its agreement with BC and other provinces. BC lost \$455 million dedicated to regulated child care. Even more regrettably, BC did not make a commitment to build a system – with or without federal funds. BC was the only province to respond to the loss of federal funds with more child care cuts and an unprecedented flurry of one-time-only grants with its unspent federal money.

In this climate, CCCABC turned to the community to ask whether our Governance Project was still relevant and worthwhile. The response was a clear and unanimous **YES**. No matter what those in power say or do, communities are not giving up their vision of a child care system that works for children, families and communities. And, if governments won’t get the job done, communities want the mandate, tools and resources to get on with it.



So, while the promise of significant public investment in building a child care system is postponed yet again, the need to foster a strong bond between communities and their child care services is more important than ever. Democratic community governance may be one of our best tools for building this bond during difficult times.

## WHAT IS GOOD GOVERNANCE?

Governance is not always easy to define. Still, we are using this term because it helps us think about the big picture of child care. Governance is bigger than coordination of services; it's bigger than service delivery models and it's bigger than funding, management and administration.

The Institute on Governance (Plumptre)\* defines it as the **“process whereby societies or organizations make important decisions, determine whom they involve and how they render account.”**

“When The Bough Breaks,” a 1993 report on services for children, youth and families in Vancouver, describes governance as **“the process of setting priorities and making decisions in the community as a whole”** or **“the process by which citizens collectively solve their problems.”**

Questions about who has ‘the power to make decisions’ about child care don’t get much airtime.

Currently in BC child care is ‘governed’ by a range of bodies including non-profit parent and community societies, privately-owned enterprises, First Nations and faith groups – most of whom are continually challenged to do the best they can with limited resources. Child Care Resource and Referral Programs across the province try to share information about child care in their communities. Publicly funded community tables of stakeholders, like BC’s Children First and Success by Six tables, also work hard to raise awareness, share information and identify priorities.

But, in spite of tremendous effort, nobody has a clear mandate to plan, develop and deliver a comprehensive child care system that gives people a voice and is accountable for meeting community needs. **Good governance of child care is part of the solution to this problem.**

## GOVERNANCE – A MEANS TO AN END

The purpose of ‘good governance’ is to build and sustain the child care system that children, families and communities need. Good governance is a tool to this end – not an end in itself.

So, our exploration of good governance models for child care started with an identification of the key elements of the child care system we advocate for. These elements became a ‘template’ ([www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabdocs/governance.html](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabdocs/governance.html)) that we used as a lens through which to examine the strengths and weaknesses of different governance models.

\* Retrieved from <http://www.iog.ca/page.asp?pageID=3&htmlarea=home>



On their own, governance structures cannot solve political problems. So, our template began with a look at the public policy context in which different governance models operate. We first asked whether the governance model operated within a context that provided adequate public funding and a public commitment to universality, quality, affordability and accessibility of child care services.

Then we added specific elements of the governance model to assess the degree to which this model advanced our principles and goals, including:

- **Accountability** to the community
- **Coordination and integration of services** ensuring efficient use of resources
- **Equitable access** across regions and diverse groups, and
- **Inclusiveness and responsiveness to diversity.**

Finally, to build a community-based child care system, we included ways through which good governance would be democratically controlled by communities by:

- Being **participatory**, with child, family, caregiver, and community involvement
- Reflecting a high level of **community ownership**
- Being delivered through **non-profit or public** organizations
- Allowing for political **autonomy**
- Being of a size/scale that allows a **direct relationship** between users and caregivers
- Having the **infrastructure** to support community involvement
- Allowing service delivery to be **decentralized**, and
- Building on community **strengths and capacities.**

The resulting template helped us explore and learn about strengths and weaknesses of different governance models.

## LOOKING AT OTHER MODELS

In order to learn from others' experiences, we selected five different existing governance models for further exploration. Three models are specific to child care – Denmark, New Zealand, and Québec – and two models govern other public or community services in BC – School Boards and Community Living BC. We chose these models because, in their own ways, each governs an accepted or emerging system of publicly funded, community-based services in slightly different ways.



Each of these 'models' are part of complex systems comprised of a diverse set of factors from public policy, to governance, to service delivery. As a result, the following summaries are not overall evaluations of each system. Rather, as much as possible, they isolate the governance aspects.

## 1 THE DENMARK CHILD CARE GOVERNANCE MODEL

The public policy context for child care in Denmark is strong with a long-standing policy of universal entitlement. The Ministry of Social Affairs has the main responsibility for Early Childhood Education and Care provision for children from birth to six years. Local authorities have a mandate to provide daycare facilities for children, ensure a sufficient supply of places, and provide support for children with special needs. These authorities determine the level of responsibility given to parent boards in daycare centres. Family child care is fully integrated into the system. Service delivery is highly decentralized and allows for a very direct relationship between users and caregivers. The model ensures coordination of services, equity across regions, and is highly inclusive of parents and caregivers. Questions remain about how responsive the model is to diversity.

## 2 THE NEW ZEALAND CHILD CARE GOVERNANCE MODEL

The emerging approach in New Zealand draws together a pre-existing plethora of different kinds of early childhood learning and care services (including private child care) under the jurisdiction of the education ministry. In the early 1980s, New Zealand established a common funding structure, common training requirements for staff, and facilitated the development of a common curriculum for children from birth to five years that applies to all child care. Government plays a proactive role in promoting access to quality child care across regions and cultural groups. The public policy context is getting stronger. Based on a 10 year strategic plan, New Zealand is moving towards universal entitlement and is committed to increased participation, improved quality and greater collaboration. Questions remain about the role parents and communities can or will play in governing the evolving system and about the impact of recent growth in corporate, for-profit child care.

## 3 THE QUÉBEC CHILD CARE GOVERNANCE MODEL

The public policy context for child care in Québec is strong, with care primarily funded by the provincial government and a cap on parental fees at \$7 a day. Non-profit community child care for children from birth to four years evolved into *centres de la petite enfance* (CPE), housed under the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine, family child care organizations are housed under "Coordinating Offices", and school-based care for 5 to 12 year olds is housed under the Ministère de l'Éducation. The CPEs currently have a clear mandate, considerable autonomy, and there is a strong province-wide planning process involving regional development councils that ensures coordination and equitable access across regions. The model is highly participatory, with parent-users comprising two-thirds of the boards of CPEs. There are questions about autonomy and coordination of services given a recent decision to separate the governance of family child care from centre-based care.





#### 4 THE COMMUNITY LIVING BRITISH COLUMBIA (CLBC) GOVERNANCE MODEL

CLBC is a BC provincial crown agency responsible for the delivery of services and supports to adults with developmental disabilities living in the community, independent planning support, family support, and residential services for children age 6 to 18 with developmental disabilities. This model was developed by a group of dedicated self- and family-advocates who felt this model reflected the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families. The board that governs CLBC must be comprised of a majority of adults with developmental disabilities and their families. Members of the board are appointed by the minister. Accountability mechanisms to the provincial government are strong. Given CLBC's focus on individualized funding, questions remain about the relevance of this model for publicly funded community-based child care governance.

#### 5 THE BC SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE MODEL

The BC School Board model is a well-established governance model through which elected boards govern K-12 public education in their districts. The strength of this model is partially in the strong public policy context in which it operates – universal entitlement to education, inclusion of children with special needs, no user fees, publicly-owned facilities, etc. Other strengths of this model include the democratically-elected board, the clear mandate they have to deliver education in their district, and public not-for-profit delivery of education. Questions remain about the actual level of School Board autonomy, the real level of parental and student involvement in governance, and the size and scale of some districts/schools that may undermine the direct relationship between users and teachers.

### LESSONS LEARNED FROM FAR AND NEAR

After reviewing these models and assessing the degree to which they achieved or promoted the elements of the system we want to achieve, it came as no surprise to learn that no model is perfect and that no model fit the BC child care situation to a 'T'. Each model has strengths and weaknesses, each has important lessons and each poses important and interesting questions.

(For detailed assessments of each model against the template see [www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabdocs/governance.html](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabdocs/governance.html))

That said – one key lesson emerged that is central for good governance of child care in BC.

- **Public policy and public funding are essential.** All of the models reviewed demonstrate a critical interdependence between public policy and funding and the governance structure. Denmark's long-





standing policy of universal entitlement to publicly administered child care is reflected in the fact that 87% of local authorities, who have the responsibility to deliver child care, guarantee child care availability. New Zealand's recent progress on child care is tied to new public policy that aims to provide 20 hours weekly of free early childhood education for every three and four year old by 2007, and a 10 year strategic plan to increase access, improve quality and coordinate services. These policies are all backed up with stable public funding. In fact, the significant interdependence between public policy/funding and governance makes it difficult to easily separate the two.

We also learned three other important lessons:

- **Governance mandates evolve over time.** While all of the models have relatively clear mandates to govern their respective systems, the strongest examples are where the mandate has evolved over time and where citizens have come to expect that their governments will provide services. The BC School Board model is a mature model where, for example, proposals to close public schools often face stiff community opposition. CLBC is relatively new, so general public awareness and expectations are still evolving.
- **Coherent governance structures can support diverse services.** These models demonstrate that centralized governance structures can support a range of diverse services. The ability to build on and sustain existing services while creating a system is possible. While each child care governance model defines the range of services it governs somewhat differently, the common element is that services that meet the developmental needs of young children **and** the needs of working families are integrated into one governance system.
- **Community control can be exercised in different ways.** From BC's elected school boards and Denmark's elected local governments, to CLBC's minister-appointed Board, to Quebec's parent-dominated CPE Boards – a range of approaches exist for communities to exercise control over their services. Some models put control in the hands of all voters. In others, control rests with those most directly affected and the size and scale of the governance structure promotes a direct relationship between decision makers and users. The higher the level of community involvement, the more secure and stable the services.

Closer to home, while we did not examine in detail emerging Aboriginal self-governance of services for children and families in BC, there is much to learn from the historic transformation currently underway. We fully respect the right of Aboriginal communities to design, deliver and govern their child care services in ways that meet their communities' needs and we support their just demands for access to the resources they need to do the job. We look forward to working with and learning from Aboriginal communities as they move forward.



# COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE OF CHILD CARE IN BC

Based on the lessons we learned from other governance models and an assessment of the current situation in BC, we conclude that:

BC communities have the knowledge, experience and commitment to deliver child care.

Now they need the power, mandate, resources and tools to build and govern a community-controlled child care system.

To date, our provincial and federal governments have shown that they are unable and unwilling to build a child care system. They have ignored the research that confirms we need a system. They have squandered resources that could have been used to start building a system. And, they have not allocated funds from healthy fiscal surpluses to build a system.

In the absence of government leadership, communities have done their best to meet the needs. Communities have made sure that child care services exist. Communities have continued to strive for quality and respect. Communities have raised public awareness about the importance of child care. And, communities have identified priorities and made plans. The problem is that communities do not yet have the power to act.

So, now it's time to give those who know and care about child care the tools to get the job done.

We propose that the place to start is with **Community Child Care Boards**.

Operating within a strong provincial public policy that guarantees access and quality, over time **Community Child Care Boards** would evolve into governing bodies with:

- **A mandate** to plan, develop and deliver child care services that meet the needs of their community
- **Capital budgets** to create sufficient non-profit and/or publicly-owned spaces to meet community needs
- **Operating budgets** to deliver affordable, quality child care, and
- **Decision-making processes** that hold them accountable to their communities.

Here is a starting scenario for how **Community Child Care Boards** could evolve in a staged way.

## → Stage 1 – Mandate and Resources to Plan for Child Care

Boards receive, from senior levels of government, a mandate, technical support and resources to assess needs and develop plans.

Community Child Care Boards:

- Assess short and long term child care needs in their communities
- Develop a plan to provide a quality space for all 3 to 5 year olds over the next four years
- Develop a plan to provide a quality space for all children from birth to 12 over the next 10 years, and
- Review and update plans regularly.

## → Stage 2 – Mandate and Resources to Develop Child Care

Boards receive, from senior levels of government, control over a stable capital budget to implement community plans.

Community Child Care Boards:

- Work with existing non-profit or public providers to expand services that meet priority needs, and
- Where appropriate, build new publicly-owned services that will be operated by the Board to meet priority needs.

## → Stage 3 – Mandate and Resources to Deliver Child Care

Boards receive control, from senior levels of government, over a stable operating budget to deliver a network of diverse services in licensed facilities, including schools, purpose-built centres, family child care homes, etc.

Community Child Care Boards:

- Consolidate project and ongoing child care related funding in their community
- Allocate stable operating funds to services to improve quality, lower fees and raise wages
- Deliver and manage some services directly
- Absorb services that may otherwise be lost to the community
- Develop methods to weave new publicly-owned and existing services into a coordinated network, and
- Explore, pilot and implement innovative and responsive service delivery models.

## → Ongoing development of decision-making processes and structures

Determine community readiness

Establish initial membership with active support for family involvement

Negotiate timeline for transfer of funds & mandate from province

Develop planning & delivery expertise

Implement democratic decision-making processes

Formalize accountability processes & legal structure





## GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE

Moving to community control of child care will only work if we build on the strengths of BC's child care community today. As we learned from New Zealand and others, it is possible to move from a patchwork of services to a coherent system that weaves together the old and new.

Here is how the key lesson we learned from other models applies to BC.

### → YES – PUBLIC POLICY AND PUBLIC FUNDING ARE ESSENTIAL.

Community control over child care cannot happen without strong public policy context and adequate funding. Community-based governance does not let senior levels of government off the hook!

It is the job of government to:

- Enact legislation that ensures universal access to non-profit or publicly-owned child care
- Provide adequate, stable budgets for child care, and
- Establish standards for equity, quality, access and inclusion.

With this framework in place, it is the job of government to transfer power and resources to communities and to ensure that communities live up to their obligations to meet the needs of all.

So, advocacy for strong child care public policy and public funding must continue. But, with a clear vision of community control before them, communities will be in an even stronger position to expect and demand action from senior levels of government.

The other lessons apply in BC too.

### → YES – IT WILL TAKE TIME.

Moving to community control will take time. It will take time for child care to be seen as a normal and expected part of the community. And, it will take time for child care services and providers to see themselves as part of a community-based child care system. That is why we recommend a staged evolution of community-based governance.

At the start, Community Child Care Boards would focus on developing 'new services' to meet unmet needs. First, they would look to whether existing non-profit community-based services can grow. Where appropriate,



they would build new non-profit or publicly-owned services themselves. Existing services would continue to operate without much change in their governing structure.

In the intermediate stages, Boards would operate within a ‘mixed model’ that includes new spaces they govern themselves, alongside independently governed existing non-profit and owner-operated centres and family child care homes. Over time, contractual and funding relationships with existing providers would move from the province to the Community Child Care Boards.

As the system matures, growth would be in non-profit or public child care with existing operators part of the system for as long as they choose to deliver services that meet community needs.

### → YES – DIVERSITY IS POSSIBLE.

Moving to community control does not mean one-size-fits-all services. Communities will have the ability to decide what mix of full and part-time, centre, family and in-home services meet their needs.

Communities will also have the ability to use service delivery models that meet their needs. This could include ‘hubs’ that include child care and other services, child care services attached to schools, and perhaps new and creative networks of neighbourhood-based family child care providers. The key is that whatever the service location or delivery model, quality, affordable, accessible and inclusive services must be owned and controlled by the community.

### → YES – COMMUNITIES CAN EXERCISE CONTROL DIFFERENTLY.

Effective community control of child care rests on two fundamental conditions:

- The job has to be given to those who have the knowledge, experience and commitment. This responsibility is too important to offload on those who don’t want it or don’t care.
- The priority of Community Child Care Boards must be to develop and deliver a child care system that promotes healthy development **and** meets the needs of working families.

With these conditions in place, the next step is for communities to explore how best to develop democratic and accountable ways of making decisions. Through this exploration, communities can and will answer questions about the range of services that should be included, whether existing intersectoral tables like Children First or Success by Six can evolve into governing bodies, whether School Boards or Municipal Councils have a role to play and even whether Community Child Care Boards can or should be elected.



## WANTED – A MINISTRY TO CHAMPION CHILD CARE

It is no surprise that during our exploration of governance models, questions emerged about which provincial ministry could provide the best home for child care. While this is not a new question, two factors heightened its relevance at this time.

1. Currently, responsibility for BC's child care rests with a Minister of State under the Ministry of Children and Family Development, while responsibility for 'early learning' rests with the Minister of Education. This split ignores the fact that quality child care *is* early learning and creates challenges and tensions for communities.

While operating funds to licensed child care programs have been cut and parent fees are going up, the Ministry of Education is using federal child care funds for new, school-based, free 'early learning' programs. These programs have many features of the child care system that BC needs with one big exception – children must attend with a parent or caregiver. Working families and their children are excluded.

Yet, the public responds positively to programs for young children that are delivered through schools – an already accepted and legitimate part of the community – and are framed as 'early learning'. It is relatively easy for School Boards to use their credibility, facilities and administrative systems to get programs up and running. And, in some communities, good relationships between School Boards and the child care community have developed.

As a result, many in the child care community have begun to reconsider whether all of child care would be better off under the Ministry of Education.

2. The New Zealand model explored through this project presented a new way to think about a possible role for a ministry. In New Zealand, overall responsibility for a wide range of early learning and child care services is housed within the Ministry of Education. But, the programs are not necessarily school-based – rather they are delivered in a diverse set of parent and educator-led programs that are, for the most part, community-based.

New Zealand offers a model of how one ministry can provide coherence by ensuring access, providing funding, improving early childhood educators' training and working conditions, and supporting a program's capacity to implement a common, creative curriculum.

As a result, many in the child care community have begun to consider whether we could use the New Zealand approach to ministerial responsibility for child care in BC.



To date, CCCABC has viewed efforts to solve the child care problem by finding the ‘right’ ministry as structural solutions to political problems. The experience over the last decade, when child care has been in several different ministries with little lasting progress, only confirmed this view. We believe that with political will to build a system, government could put child care in the Ministry of Highways and get the job done. Without political will, no ministry will get the job done.

Further, we have concerns about a downward extension of an academic-focused, narrowly defined ‘school readiness’ agenda if child care was to move into the Ministry of Education.

However, community feedback received through this project suggested that there may be new reasons to reconsider the Ministry of Education. The key points highlighted were:

- The public generally supports and understands universal public education and is therefore more open to services for young children that are delivered in a ‘learning’ framework.
- Public education is a mature system that has the capacity to develop and deliver publicly-owned programs within a provincial framework that guarantees universal access.
- Early childhood educators can move towards parity with primary school teachers if they are part of the same system.
- There are ways to maintain community-based delivery within a Ministry of Education.

This led us to re-examine whether child care should move to the Ministry of Education and, like School Boards, whether Community Child Care Boards should operate within that ministry.

After careful consideration, we concluded that the Ministry of Education has not yet demonstrated it has the knowledge, experience or commitment to build the child care system BC needs. While progress has been made in some places, the Ministry of Education has not yet consistently shown that:

- It understands the need to support children’s holistic development
- It understands and respects the needs of working families
- It understands and appreciates the expertise and value of early childhood educators, and
- It understands the need for meaningful parental involvement in services for young children.

But the Ministry of Education is not alone. Regrettably, no BC ministry has demonstrated that it is an effective child care champion. No ministry has made child care a cornerstone of progressive family policy, and no ministry has secured adequate funds to build a system.

So, rather than calling for one more structural fix, we are turning the tables. We are calling on current and future Ministers who are ready, willing and able to build a child care system to step forward, take up the challenge of being child care champions and demonstrate through their actions that they deserve community support.





## THE CONVERSATION HAS JUST BEGUN

So far, our exploration of child care governance has been stimulating and provocative. During difficult times, we have been able to put energy into strengthening our long-term vision for a community-based child care system that works for children, families, providers and communities.

Above all, we affirmed the leadership role communities can and do play in building that system!

But, our work to date is **directional**. Rather than answering every question, it offers a direction for discussion about moving forward. And, the conversation about how to make community governance of child care possible is just beginning.

We can't wait to hear what you have to say. We invite you to 'imagine' and build with us.

Please send your comments, ideas and suggestions to [info@cccabc.bc.ca](mailto:info@cccabc.bc.ca). Our mailing address is 2772 East Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5M 1Y8. You can also check out our website at [www.cccabc.bc.ca](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca). We look forward to hearing from you.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC wants to thank **VanCity Community Foundation** for its support of this project. We would also like to thank the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC Office for its willingness to be our partner on this child care governance journey.

Thanks also go to the dedicated and tireless members of the Governance Project Reference Group, who brought their wisdom, laughter and optimism to the creation of this vision – Maryann Bird, Gyda Chud, Mab Oloman, Mary Walters and Vi-Anne Zirnhelt.

Much of the background work for this project was completed by Jocelyn Helland who worked with us as an outstanding Research Associate. Jocelyn's exploration of other governance models and of the lessons to be learned from these models was invaluable.

Thanks also to Jeanine McDonnell for her efficient administrative support and to Sharon Gregson and Avi Goldberg for their great publication production skills.

This journey would not have been possible without the foresight, the commitment, the knowledge and the passion of Rita Chudnovsky, who 'femtors' so many of us, so brilliantly.

Last, but definitely not least, thanks to communities across BC who, during very difficult times, shared their vision for children, families and communities and helped us keep our collective eye on the prize.

*Susan Harney, Chair  
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC*



# COALITION OF CHILD CARE ADVOCATES OF BC

---

[www.cccabc.bc.ca](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca)

2772 East Broadway  
Vancouver, BC V5M 1Y8

NOVEMBER 2007