



YWCA
CANADA

A TURNING POINT
FOR WOMEN
UN POINT TOURNANT
POUR LES FEMMES

Building a Community Architecture for Early Childhood Learning and Care* June, 2004

Project Overview

YWCA Canada is pleased to undertake a pan-Canadian community development project that is funded by Social Development Canada and hosted by our local YWCA Member Associations in Vancouver, Saskatoon, Cambridge and Halifax.

We hope to show that a country as diverse as Canada can have a national child care strategy. We will do this by demonstrating that four different communities – each starting from a different resource base and with different funding and policy frameworks – can develop unique, responsive service delivery models that also meet overarching national criteria.

Project Principles

YWCA Canada believes that child care supports healthy child development, parents in their various roles, and women's equality. Our core principles reflect those held by many child care advocates in Canada and form the baseline for our conceptual models which must assure high quality, affordability, accessibility, inclusiveness, public funding and accountability to the citizens of Canada.

Vancouver's Child Care Strategy

We recognize and respect Vancouver's long-standing commitment to these child care principles, the leadership role that the City has played in child care planning and development, and the importance of the resources the City allocates to support child care services.

In 2002, the City of Vancouver reviewed and updated its child care strategy in the document "Moving Forward - Childcare: A Cornerstone of Child Development Services". This strategic plan sets out a vision of child care and child development hubs located within schools, community centres, neighbourhood houses and City owned buildings. Child development hubs are central in supporting parents and family child care providers as well as small stand alone child care centres.

Knowing that such a model requires stable base funding for full implementation, and in the absence of universal funding for child care, the City's vision focuses on preserving and slightly expanding current child care services by integrating and maximizing existing resources. The February 2004 joint child care protocol established between the City, School Board, and Park Board is an important step towards achieving this objective.

* For the purposes of this document, 'Early Childhood Learning and Care' is synonymous with 'child care'.

Helping to Implement the Vision

The City of Vancouver has developed an overall child care vision that meets community needs and is broadly consistent with national principles. YWCA Canada and Vancouver are both committed to working collaboratively with the City and other stakeholders through this project to build on and add value to existing work. As a result, and based on preliminary discussions with the City Child Development Coordinator, we believe that there are two ways in which this project can help to implement Vancouver's vision for child care:

1. **Detail the Vision** – the project could help answer questions such as: How would child development hubs in specific networks/neighbourhoods be developed in ways that meet both local needs and the overall City vision, principles and standards? What are the essential components of a child development hub? How do we build on what already exists? What support infrastructure is required? What are the barriers to service integration?
2. **Cost the Vision** – while the City has identified the lack of a stable funding base as a key barrier, the estimated costs and benefits of a quality, affordable and accessible child care system specifically for the City of Vancouver have not yet been developed. This analysis can build on existing cost/benefit analyses and expertise, utilize available financial information on City-supported child care programs, and help assess both the infrastructure and operating costs of integrated child development hubs.

A cost/benefit analysis is an important tool in advocating for a publicly funded pan-Canadian child care system. The federal government is transferring increased funds for child care and early childhood development to the provinces. By illustrating the benefits of publicly funded child care we can help to raise public awareness and support, build on this national momentum, and influence the allocation of child care funds in BC in a way that is consistent with both national principles and Vancouver's vision.

Who Will Be Involved?

Collaboration and consultation are key to our project's success. The primary, day-to-day collaboration will be between City and YWCA Canada staff, and together they will develop an appropriate consultation strategy.

Lynell Anderson. B. Comm., CGA is YWCA Canada's community coordinator for Vancouver.

Lynell has a long history of involvement in child care and children's advocacy work in BC. Most recently she served as an Associate Child and Youth Officer with the BC Office for Children and Youth and as the Manager of Finance, Communications and Administration with the Office of the Child, Youth and Family Advocate. She has also worked as Advisor and Principal Consultant for Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre. Lynell currently represents BC on the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada board of directors, is Treasurer for the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and is the co-author of *If There's a Will-There's a Way, BC Child Care Funding Options Project*.