

## SMART SOLUTIONS FOR BC FAMILIES :: JOIN THE CONVERSATION

*The following are excerpts from comments posted at [www.advocacyforum.bc.ca](http://www.advocacyforum.bc.ca)*

### Tell us about your experiences

We asked:

- How long have you waited? Tell us about your experience trying to access a quality space for your child.
- If you are a parent, tell us whether fees for quality child care are affordable for you.
- If you work in child care, tell us what it would take for you to make a living wage.

POSTED ON 07 SEP 2009 BY KERRY

I am a 22 year old mother who had a steady paying job but recently had to resign on August 31st 2009 due to not being able to find child care in my community. ...

I am scared, worried and without a huge part of my family's income. Even after all the expenses in child care I would at least bring home 800.00 which to some is not much but now it is ZERO! I am a positive thinker therefore I have already set new goals for my family but even if I did want pursue those how would I with no child care and really no means to pay for it? How will I better this family?

NO Child Care = NO Job

POSTED ON 17 JUN 2009 BY CHRISTINA

We live in Vancouver, and put our child on the wait list for the day care near our home about 2 weeks after we found out we were pregnant. Two years and six months later, we got him a spot at a toddler center (he was 22 months old when he got in). We knew before we got pregnant that the wait list was around 2 years long, so we had to think long and hard about whether or not we could afford some alternative for 2 years before we even decided to have a child. The wait list is currently 1500 families for the facility we got into. That is after it opened 100 new spots just this year. The wait list is still that long. I wonder what could even potentially solve that seemingly insane wait.

I have to admit that the cost of child care, whether in our own home, in someone else's home, or in a group setting, has serious impacts on our decision whether to have a child in the first place, and then has had an even greater impact on our decision not to have more than one. Living in Vancouver, our mortgage is already ridiculously high, and doubling our childcare costs on top of this is simply not realistic, even with both of us working.

The \$100 per month that we get for child care, supposedly offering us a "choice," is a shameful attempt at a political statement that does not actually accomplish much for families. ... it's taxable, and even if it were a full \$100 per month, what can that get you? A few nights of baby sitting, realistically. The "choice" that this provides us is very little choice at all; the only choice we have is to pay out of pocket large fees for private care that we had to wait years to get into. Ultimately it contributed to our choice to have only one child. It did not allow one of us to choose to stay at home; ... we would not have been able to stay in Vancouver if we were to have taken this route, due to the high housing costs.

POSTED ON 11 MAY 2009 BY CAROLE

How little society values our most precious resources... I remember being a single parent in the late 60's... no child support... living in a small town and working in the pink ghetto sector (secretary)... moved to edmonton with my 4 year old son and received subsidized child care.... I thought I had died and gone to heaven. What a difference that made to both of us... trips to the dentist, community outings and participation! Yes we do need a national child care policy.

POSTED ON 08 MAY 2009 BY DIANE

When I was pregnant and started looking for childcare I wasn't in total shock at how hard it was. I had heard all the rumours of how hard it would be to find childcare and to start looking early. With the expenses of putting your child on wait lists (often \$25 and up per location) and then the total lack of spots my husband and I started getting worried the closer and closer my return to work came.

We did not have any choices in where we wanted to send our son. With trying to find something on a reasonable commute route we were only ever offered two spots. The first I did not feel totally comfortable with and the daycare worker would be out of town for 6 weeks or so that we would have been high and dry for daycare anyways. The second position was alright, but not in a very convenient location for my husband. The stress of taking my son to daycare has been hard on our whole family.

When I read that we ranked 25th out of 25 developed countries with regards to our childcare I again was not totally surprised but was sad for the state of our child care. For being such a proud Canadian I am now a disappointed and stressed mother that wishes our child care options could be less expensive, standardized and more readily available.

POSTED ON 08 MAY 2009 BY J. EDWARDS

I am the Mother of 3 wonderful boys. The oldest are 4 year old twins. Until last year I was not able to place them in daycare. There were no spaces for toddlers. My Husband and I both had well paying union positions, however I was only able to work when he was at home during the evenings and on weekends. This option is not conducive to the family environment people hope for. Leaving us to do things as single parental units.

Last year when the boys turned 3 we were able to place them in a local daycare. It is a great facility. It is very busy and has also just opened up an infant section. However the ladies who work there are not paid enough to look after our children.

The infant section may prove to be useful to us this year as we welcomed another baby boy to our family this past September. However they may not have space for us, as of right now we are on the waiting list.

I have spoken with subsidy. They said they would cover the 2 hours a day of a licensed preschool that is offered at this daycare. But I still have two boys that would require another 6 hours a day. ... so we would still be paying for full days which are \$32.00 a day for each older boy. That's \$64.00 a day. The infant is \$50.00 a day! This is actually inexpensive compared to some of the prices in bigger centres. ... That's \$570.00 a week or \$2280.00 a month, WHAT! This is 3X our monthly mortgage payment. Our mortgage payment is quite low compared to some and we moved to a rural town where housing prices were half of what they were in the bigger centres.

I don't know what to do? How is one family supposed to be able to afford this?

POSTED ON 29 JAN 2009 BY JENNIFER

I am a single mom of 2.5 year old twins. I am out of pocket \$624 per month for daycare. I get the minimum amount of subsidy. My twins and I are really struggling right now. I have a good job with good pay but somehow we still have no money left and are constantly struggling just to buy groceries! Daycare costs are slowly pushing us closer to poverty.

POSTED ON 26 JAN 2009 BY RACHAEL

I was just reassessed for childcare subsidy and found out I no longer qualify. I have 9 year old twins and my costs have suddenly gone up almost \$400/month! I am a single mother with a very good job, but I live in Vancouver and pay ridiculous rent. I moved here to be closer to medical care as one of my sons is disabled. Now not only do I have to pay more for childcare, I have to make a decision about medical equipment I can afford...should I get his leg brace or his hearing aids first? No child in his condition should have to go without, but I am now put in this place. Difficult choices to make thanks to a backwards program and underfunded spaces.

POSTED ON 22 JAN 2009 BY JOANNA

I want to return to work part-time. I was informed by one of the few quality centres where I live that my son could not attend daycare part-time until he was two years old. There is pressure for women to work, and to produce children, but no support. I should not have to worry about putting my child with an untrained, undocumented childcare provider because quality care is not available.

POSTED ON 10 SEP 2008 BY ERIN

Recently I was told after my son started first grade that I no longer qualified for a daycare subsidy. My income was the same level as when he was in kindergarden but they told me that because my son had turned six that the formulas changed. To have my son in before and after school care I am charged 320.00 per month.

Is take home pay of 1860.00 per month too much to get assistance? I am told it is by the provincial government. ... The law says he cannot stay at home by himself (not that I would do that anyway!!) and the government has also legislated that a child over six somehow isn't as important as one who is three? Does this make any sense?

POSTED ON 25 JUN 2008 BY KAREN

A family is diverse and encompasses many different situations and circumstances and does not fit one stereotype, but our subsidy calculations and program are ridged in their expectations and outcomes. Frustrating and defeating to many many families.

The cost of care for parents and wages earned are insufficient thus a formula for disaster impacting the family unit.

Wages for child care staff are inadequate with little or no benefits being paid by employer. This profession is mentally, physically, emotionally encompassing with health and safety risks most can not comprehend. The lack of reasonable and adequate wages/benefits is the major reason for shortage of staff.

If we believe in the children of this country and the impact of early years being so significant then why why why haven't things changed to meet the demands of child care? Is it because those making these decisions really don't care? Is it they don't understand? Is it they can't see the importance? Is it because of the all mighty dollar? What is holding the government back from making the right decision for children and families in Canada a priority?

POSTED ON 16 JUN 2008 BY JAMEY

I was shocked to learn that it was advised I put my name on a waitlist for daycare before my child was even born! Now that I'm getting ready to return to work, I'm finding that there aren't nearly as many daycare spots available for infants as there should be. I understand that the ratio is (and should be) 4:1, but can't believe the costs I'm being quoted - I live in the Tri-Cities, and FT daycare for infants averages at \$950 to \$1000 a month!!!! I've yet to find a single daycare that has all the qualities I'm looking for that isn't in the opposite direction of where I have to go to work. ... One daycare I'm on a waitlist for won't be able to tell me whether I've got a spot until closer to my return to work date. They told me that I should DEFINITELY be on several waitlists. The situation is causing a lot of stress for sure.

POSTED ON 16 JUN 2008 BY STEPHANIE

I was able to use out of school care provided by a community association in a building on school property until they lost their subsidy and was forced to charge more than \$20 a day for after school care. I felt forced to change schools in order for my child to be able to walk to my work after school where for free she can sit in an empty office all by herself for two hours each day rather than get to spend quality time playing and getting help with her homework from qualified staff.

I am sad that I cannot afford \$400 a month for childcare, but angry for my child as she is being ripped off! Children need open spaces, appropriate activities and safe care options and as a parent I should be able to find affordable care in our local area.

Let's take a lesson from Quebec and provide affordable child care for all families! Our children deserve the best!

POSTED ON 15 JUN 2008 BY JEANNETTE

I am a single mother of a 6 year old boy. For almost 4 years I was getting help from the government to pay for my child's daycare. Now they won't help me they say I make too much money. HOW DOES A SINGLE MOTHER MAKE TOO MUCH MONEY? Especially in this day and age. I pay more for daycare than I do for rent. I happen to work in the childcare industry as an Early Childhood Educator and I have been for 5 years. I left one centre for another because of better pay and since I've done that I now make too much. I am struggling more now than ever.

I'm angry and frustrated that everyone talks about lowering childcare fees and getting a better system but still nothings being done about it. I say enough talking and start taking action. Also as an Early Childhood Educator I do feel strongly that we are underpaid for what we do.

## **Tell us what YOU need child care to be**

We know families need child care to be affordable and available in their communities. We've outlined the current lack of affordability and availability, and how it could change.

We asked:

- what other elements of a child care system are important to you and your family?

POSTED ON 01 JAN 2009 BY AMED

Childcare needs to be affordable. Many parents don't receive any subsidy because they "make too much money". This is really a joke. Paying anywhere from \$700 - \$1000 per child/month for care is not reasonable. How are parents expected to support children, pay mortgages and all other living expenses when they're faced with huge monthly daycare bills? Parents who are "doing OK" are completely unable to get ahead, unable to save money for their children's education & their own retirement because they are burdened with huge monthly expenses every time they turn around. And daycare providers do not make enough money for what they do. These people are helping to raise our children and yet they make barely enough to put them above the poverty line. It is truly a disgrace that this is happening in Canada.

POSTED ON 25 JUN 2008 BY KAREN

I have been in the Early Childhood field for the past 25 years. The experience as a parent and as an Educator has been a blessing and aggravating to say the least.

I believe and place great value working with children and families for a host of reasons. The first is supporting children and their families. If families are successful and supported then we have productive children and supporting individuals who are contributing to society.

As a manager of a licensed facility I see and deal day after day with the frustration of parents who can not obtain subsidy because of the rigid expectations or that are made wait for approval which impacts their space in a centre. Long wait list that force parents into taking space where they can find spaces, which can translate into a safety issue. Child care rates that are rising to meet operating a child care centre and these increases do not offset the cost of maintaining high quality staff. Increase cost of maintenance and services needed to ensure licensing standards.

I believe the solutions have been clearly outlined in the Smart Solutions for BC Families website. Let's not reinvent the wheel is it possible for someone in government to take this situation seriously and make the changes so needed.

POSTED ON 08 MAY 2008 BY LEIGHANN

I am an Early Childhood Educator who has been working in the field for the past 16 years. I am very dedicated to providing the best quality, reliable and affordable childcare programming for the children in my community. I am continually frustrated when I am turning children away because we do not have space in our programs or because we do not have qualified staff to open the spaces we do have. I am frustrated that as a non profit daycare my staff are paid far below what they are worth (some have not had a raise in the past 10 years). And I am frustrated that as a care provider I have to raise fees for services that some times are out of reach for many parents (often these are the parents that do not qualify for child care subsidy) and increased fees put an additional strain on the whole family.

I would like to see a system that treats early childhood education as an important resource and service and allows all families equal access to services such as preschools and daycare regardless of financial standing. I would like to see a system that provides on going funding for basic resources and equipment. I would like to see a system that values and respects our level of training and commitment to children. I would like to see a system that provides a fair working wage to child care providers. I would like to see a system where the decision makers really listen to the worker on the front lines and really hear what is important to us, children and families, so they stop throwing away money on surveys, one time initiatives and "new" services that have no impact and start focusing on the existing programs.