

A COMMON VISION AND AGENDA FOR CHILD CARE IN BC

This document is endorsed by the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum

BC is well served by several dynamic, provincial membership-based child care organizations, each with its own mandate and priorities. Over the last several years, many of these organizations have come to see that we share some “common ground”. In March 1999, representatives from six organizations met to affirm our commitment to a collective voice for child care. While we recognized the importance of working on our own priorities, we all agreed that without a common vision for child care, few of our long-term goals are achievable. We all share responsibility for advancing our common beliefs.

What is our Child Care Vision?

A comprehensive child care system includes a wide range of quality, affordable and accessible programs and services that facilitate the growth and development of all children.

These include:

- full and part-time programs for children from birth to 12 years;
- centre, family and in-home care;
- family resource and support programs;
- child care resource and referral programs and other information services that support all families and caregivers; and
- programs that support the full inclusion of all children and families.

Quality child care is a cornerstone of a comprehensive early childhood development strategy. It helps build strong communities and supports families in their parenting role; enables parents to participate in work, study and community life; promotes equitable opportunities for women in society; contributes to a healthy economy and is an essential piece of a strategy to reduce poverty, exclusion and isolation.

What is our Child Care Agenda?

We are committed to a child care system that:

1. Entitles all children to access quality child care and early childhood programs, regardless of their families' economic or employment status.
2. Honours and respects the diversity of BC's children, families and communities.
3. Provides families with choices from a range of coordinated, quality, licensed and regulated child care programs.
4. Is publicly funded through the tax system and affordable for all families who need or want to use it.
5. Provides caregivers with training opportunities, wages, benefits and working conditions that are commensurate with their education, experience and responsibilities.
6. Meets and exceeds standards that are associated with quality and positive childhood development.
7. Is complemented by a comprehensive family policy that includes extended parental leave and progressive family/work policies.

What Does the Research say?

Most Canadians support our vision:

Results of a 2002 poll Perceptions of Quality Child Care show that:

- 90% of Canadians want a nationally coordinated child care plan that gives all children access to quality child care.
- 86% of Canadians support a publicly funded child care system that makes quality child care available to all children.
- 88% of Canadians support increased wages for caregivers.

[Millward, Brown, Goldfarb for the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada & Canadian Child Care Federation, 2002]

Quality child care is good for children:

“Studies... have found that high quality day-care increases children’s linguistic, cognitive, and social competencies, and... that participation in high quality day-care arrangements has long-lasting benefits for children from low income families.”

[The Importance of Quality Child Care, Kohen & Hertzman, 1998]

Public investment in child care makes economic sense:

A 1998 cost-benefit analysis of child care in Canada concluded that for every \$1 invested in licensed child care there is a \$2 benefit.

[The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care, Cleveland and Krashinsky, 1998]

“The investment in early childhood produces lower social spending on families, higher tax revenues to government and greater economic security.”

[The New Liberalism: Ideas and Ideals, Sherri Torjman, The Caledon Institute, 2003]

Other countries recognize the value of investing in the early years:

“Improving the quality of, and access to early childhood education and care has become a major policy priority in OECD Member countries... the early years are increasingly viewed as the first step in lifelong learning and a key component of a successful education, social and family policy agenda.”

[Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001]

Canada and BC are falling behind:

A 2001 study of Canadian child care found that other than in Quebec, over the last decade, regulated child care has declined, policy incoherence has grown and Canada has fallen behind other countries.

[Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, Friendly, Beach and Turiano, 2001]

A 2002 survey of 700 BC caregivers shows that because of provincial funding cuts, 57% of child care programs have fewer subsidized children, 49% have decreased enrolment, 31% have increased fees, 19% may close in the near future and 52% are concerned about their future viability.

[Where Are the Children?, BC Child Care Advocacy Forum, 2003]

The case for high quality child care has been well documented and articulated by respected leaders from both inside and outside the child care community.

The needs have been identified.

The challenges and concerns are clear.

The solutions are achievable.

Now it’s time for action!

What Can You Do?

It will take all of us working together to ensure that our children get what they need and deserve. You can:

- Share this vision and agenda in your community.
- Make this vision and agenda a priority in your work.
- Have your organization endorse this vision and agenda.
- Let your local, provincial and federal politicians know that you are counting on them to act.
- Join one or more of the member organizations of the Advocacy Forum.
- Check our website regularly for current advocacy campaigns.
- Speak up and out for children, families and communities.