

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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Participating Organizations:

BC Association of
Child Care Services

Coalition of Child Care
Advocates of BC

Early Childhood
Educators of BC

School Age Child Care
Association

Westcoast Child Care
Resource Centre

Western Canada Family
Child Care Association
of BC

Funding and Support provided by:

Status of Women Canada
- BC/Yukon Region
through Coalition of Child
Care Advocates of BC



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Publicly Funded Child Care What Does It Mean?

The Advocacy Forum is committed to working for a child care system in BC that entitles all children access to quality child care and early childhood programs, regardless of their families' economic or employment status.

Such a system requires public policies and budgets that move child care from a user fee system – which it is now - to one primarily funded through the tax system like so many other services in our communities.

Public parks, libraries, firehalls, schools, hospitals, and streets are examples of facilities and services that are paid for through the tax system. These services are there for anyone in the community who wants or needs to use them. It's not that they are 'free services'. Funding for their operating budgets primarily comes from one or more levels of government.

Public libraries are a good example. It costs money to build, stock and run libraries. As a society, we have decided that it makes sense to pool our money, through the tax system, so that everyone can use them. People can still go to a bookstore to buy books – but everyone, regardless of their income, can borrow books from the public library.

In some cases, publicly funded services have a small fee attached. Pay parking at a public beach is one example. Public funding means that the beach will still be there even if everyone comes by foot, bike or bus.

This is NOT the approach we use to fund child care. That's not to say that there is no public funding of child care. The child care subsidy program and the child care operating fund are funded through the taxes we pay to the province and anyone who uses these programs is receiving public funds.

The problem is that current public funding only covers a small part of the cost of child care. Unlike parks or libraries, child care is primarily funded by parent fees. In BC, public funding for child care totals around \$200 million a year. BC parents pay more than \$1.3 BILLION each year from their own pockets.

This user-fee system is not working! Children from middle and lower income families cannot access quality child care programs because their families cannot afford to pay costly fees. Child care can actually cost parents more than their child's university education later on, but it comes at a time when family earning power is often less. The needs of too many young children and their families go unmet because of a lack of public funding for child care.

Our goal is to turn the tables so that most of the cost of child care comes from public funding with a small portion coming from parent fees. The child care system would be stable and accessible. Everyone who pays taxes would be supporting the child care system because, like parks and schools, these services benefit us all. Quality child care offers children a good start in life – and that's good for everyone!

In a nutshell, this is what we mean by publicly funded child care.