



OUR CHILD CARE PLAN¹

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC supports the right of every child and family to access quality child care within their own community. To realize this right, we need a publicly funded, community-delivered, comprehensive non-profit child care system that:

- ✓ provides **children** from birth to 12 years of age with optimal environments in which to grow and thrive.
- ✓ provides **families** with a range of quality, affordable, inclusive, accessible choices including licensed family and centre-based care.
- ✓ provides **those who care for our children** the wages, working conditions and respect that reflect the value of the work they do.
- ✓ helps build cohesive, equitable, safe and healthy **communities**.

The reasons are self-evident and fully supported by extensive, credible research. The early years are a critical period of development. The vast majority of parents, especially mothers of young children, are in the paid labour force and use non-parental care. The quality of care their children receive matters. Good care promotes healthy development but poor care can do harm.

Yet, society has still not responded with adequate public policy or resources. That is why we have called on successive provincial and federal governments to:

- ✓ make a political commitment to build a publicly funded, universal child care system.
- ✓ develop and implement an action plan that moves us towards that vision.

In the face of the regressive child care policies and funding cuts in BC over the last 4 years, there was little hope of real success. **The political will was simply not there!**

The current provincial election is an opportune time for the Coalition to release the essential elements of a doable **Child Care Action Plan**. This Plan:

- ✓ clearly demonstrate that if there is political will – a system can be built.
- ✓ outlines how and where to begin.
- ✓ sets a standard by which the child care plans of others can and will be judged.

Our Child Care Plan has two key elements:

- ✓ **Provincial Child Care Legislation**
- ✓ **5 Actions to Build the System**

The following Plan briefly outlines the essential components of each element.

Yes, there are still many details to be worked through. If the next provincial government is committed to act on these elements early in their mandate, we are ready, willing and able to work with them and the community to make the plan a reality.

¹ This Action Plan owes much to the 15 year plan advanced by our sister organization, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada *From Patchwork to Framework – A Child Care Strategy for Canada* www.childcareadvocacy.ca/resources/pdf/framework_cc.pdf

OUR CHILD CARE PLAN

A. PROVINCIAL CHILD CARE LEGISLATION

To enshrine the right of BC children and families to access quality child care, we need provincial legislation that commits BC to building a publicly funded child care system based on the following principles:

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| Quality | Services are governed by provincial regulations that promote the emotional, cognitive, social, cultural and healthy development of children. |
| Universality | Every child in BC is entitled to high quality child care services regardless of their abilities, economic, cultural or linguistic circumstances, geographical location or parents' work status. |
| Accessibility | Services are integrated and coherent and enable parents to work or study and to participate in their children's early learning. Cost and location are not barriers to participation. |
| Developmental | Services are appropriate for and responsive to the unique needs of individual children and to the developmental stages, interests and capabilities of the group. |
| Inclusive | Services are inclusive of children with disabilities and are culturally responsive to Canada's diverse population. |
| Non-profit | Services operate under the auspice of public and non-profit management as this contributes to community development and provides accountability measures that ensure all funding remains within the service. |
| Accountable | Governments and service providers are responsible to parents, children, and the public for child care quality, funding and service levels. |

B. ACTION TO BUILD THE SYSTEM

To implement Provincial Child Care Legislation, we need coordinated action in 5 key areas:

1. **Fund the System.** Action is required to:

- Shift the burden of the cost of child care from user fees to public funding. Move towards the goal of reducing total parental fee contributions to no more than 20% of the overall cost of care and providing 80% of total costs through public funding.
- Begin to build a stable child care budget by restoring provincial child care funding to 2001/02 levels. Supplement this with a fair share of federal funds under existing transfer agreements and all of the new projected federal funds under the pending agreement on a national child care system.
- Provide substantial operating funds to eligible child care services to achieve the 'shift'.
- Tie operating funds to achieving the goals of affordability by capping parent fees at a standard rate; improved wages and working conditions (see #3); enhanced quality (see #5) and accountability for public funds received.
- Provide subsidies for low-income families who are still unable to afford fees while reducing the overall subsidy budget as fewer families require assistance with fees.

2. **Expand the system.** Action is required to:

- Develop incremental targets and timelines for providing care to an increasing percentage of children from birth to 12 years of age in full- and part-time spaces.
- Provide an adequate capital budget for creating the required number of additional spaces and deliver capital funds through non-profit administered bodies.
- Ensure adequate operating funding for new spaces as they are added.
- Develop parent/community controlled governing structures to oversee the planning, development, and management of child care services.

3. **Develop the workforce.** Action is required to:

- Establish benchmarks and targets for raising wages and improving working conditions for the child care sector.
- Expand Early Childhood Education training programs offered through the BC public post-secondary system to meet projected need and provide adequate student financial support to ensure accessibility.
- Provide on-going resources to community-based organizations that support caregivers in communities across the province.

4. **Meet diverse needs.** Action is required to:

- Provide on-going resources to community-based organizations that provide information, resources and supports to parents in meeting their child care needs.
- Provide resources to support the full inclusion of children with a range of abilities in licensed child care spaces.
- Provide Aboriginal communities with the authority and resources required to develop and deliver on and off reserve aboriginal child care services.
- Demonstrate and implement a range of approaches for meeting rural and remote child care needs.
- Demonstrate and implement approaches for meeting minority cultural needs, the needs of families with atypical work schedules or other special circumstances.

5. **Enhance quality.** Action is required to:

- Ensure licensing standards reflect best practice in areas that directly affect quality.
- Develop rich and stimulating environments that nurture children's growth and development and respond to their individual needs.
- Ensure child care services have the ability to support families in their parenting role.
- Connect children, families, caregivers and child care services with their communities and other family support services.
- Develop a range of strategies that positively impact quality of care such as high adult to child ratios; stable, consistent care giving; small group sizes; caregivers who are well trained in child development; adequate health, safety and physical environments; decent wages and working conditions; good workplace morale and unionization.