

A child care system that works for BC - it is doable

Child Care: Let's Make It Happen! campaign partners have a vision for a BC child care system that supports children, families, communities and our economy – now and in the future.

Our vision is based on practical considerations – it is doable! It's a matter of choices, priorities and focused public investments. Others do it and so can we. Here's why.

We spend less on young children and their families than most other industrialized countries.

- In Canada, almost 1 in 6 children live in poverty. BC has the highest child poverty rate at 23.5% - almost 1 in 4. *Campaign 2000 Report Card 2006*.
- Canada's spending on Early Learning and Child Care, as a percentage of our GDP, ranks lower than 14 other comparable countries. *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care. Annex C, pg. 246. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2006*.
- Rates of access to Early Learning and Child Care Programs for Canada's 3-5 year olds ranks at the bottom of 20 other countries. *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care. Country Profiles. OECD 2006*.
- The combined family benefit package that BC families receive from the federal and provincial governments ranks below packages in 11 other countries, including the UK where the package is 70 percent more generous; Australia, where the package is over 50 percent higher; and Austria which provides a benefit package that is three times that available in BC. *Kershaw, Institute for Research on Public Policy 2007*.

Focused public investment pays off.

- Conservative estimates indicate that public investment in a quality, universal system provides **2:1 returns** in reduced social and other costs later on. *Cleveland and Krashinsky 1999*.
- Quebec, the only province in Canada with a universal child care system, **annually recoups 40%** of its yearly expenditures on child care through increased tax revenue generated by increased labour force attachment alone. *Baker, Gruber & Milligan, CD Howe Institute 2006*.
- **44% of BC businesses face labour shortages** that restrict their ability to meet demand. *CGA-BC 2006*.

Child care - let's make it happen!

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The costs of a child care system are known.

- A net annual incremental investment of \$1.2 billion will fund a high quality, affordable child care system for all BC children.
- Phased in over five years, this investment can reduce parental fees, increase early childhood educators' remuneration and create spaces.

Canada and BC can afford it.

- Canada has the highest employment and real growth rate in the G7 countries (1997-2005).
- In 2005/06, total federal/provincial surpluses were \$26 billion.
- Canada has had federal surpluses since 1997.
- BC's surplus in 2007 was close to \$3 billion.

Other countries make it happen.

- Many European countries have well-established child care systems that have been in place for decades.
- In seven countries reviewed by the OECD, 90% or more of 3–6 year olds have access to Early Learning and Child Care Programs *OECD, 2006*.
- Even Malawi, with a per capita GDP of only \$620 and a HIV infection rate of 15%, provides 29% of their pre-school children with access to quality, hub-based child care services - compared to less than 20% in BC. *Human Early Learning partnership (HELP) 2006*.
- More recently, New Zealand has embarked on a ten year plan to provide universal access to early learning and child care system.
- Highlights of the New Zealand model that BC could learn from include:
 - Curriculum that honours indigenous culture;
 - Valuing of caregivers through improved training and compensation;
 - Public investment that covers up to 85% of basic operating costs for early childhood care programs. *Goelman, 2004*.

The evidence is in.

Child care makes good economic sense.

It is doable!

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