



Submission to Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services \$10aDay Child Care Recommendations for BC Budget 2020¹

June 26, 2019 Written Submission

The BC government has taken bold initial steps towards its commitment to universal child care by reducing parent fees, raising educator wages and education, affirming its support for Indigenous-led child care and introducing \$10aDay Prototype Sites across the province. These steps are broadly supported by the 90% of British Columbians – across all ages, regions and political allegiances² – who believe that public investments in a quality, affordable child care system are important. And, almost two-thirds of parents with child care experience say current government investments are having a positive impact on their child care situation.

British Columbians also know that there is much more to do. Child care still puts a financial strain on 76% of families and 70% say a parent had to remain away from work longer after parental leave because child care was unavailable.

There are still only enough licensed spaces for about 20% of young children in BC, so Budget 2020 must include an updated three-year plan with funding to make quality, affordable child care available to many more families, promptly and effectively, as proposed in the \$10aDay Plan. In summary, starting in 2020/21, government should:

- 1. Develop and fund a separate child care capital budget, using these funds to create new \$10aDay child care facilities in every community, just like public schools.**
- 2. Increase child care operating funding by an additional \$200 million each year, using these funds to continue raising educator wages and lowering parent fees, with more \$10aDay prototype sites.**

Our Budget 2020 recommendations, outlined in more detail below, may be familiar to you as they are similar to our Budget 2019 recommendations, not yet implemented. Implementation in Budget 2020 is now even more urgent, and

¹ The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC is an inclusive, feminist, membership-based organization comprised of individuals and groups including parents, grandparents, child care providers, community organizations, academics and unions. Through research, public education and mobilization, we work collectively to achieve a high-quality, affordable, accessible child care system that serves the public interest. We do not receive funding from the Province of BC.

With the Early Childhood Educators of BC, we developed the *Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning* - grounded in research and evidence, informed by policy lessons from other jurisdictions, strengthened through ongoing consultation province-wide and popularly known as the \$10aDay Child Care Plan.

² Poll conducted in May 2019 by Research Co. on behalf of \$10aDay Plan.

consistent with the perspectives of **more than three-quarters of British Columbians who believe government should move more quickly to achieve the goals of the \$10aDay Child Care Plan.**

BC Budget 2020 Recommendations:

- 1. Access - to create quality licensed spaces more quickly and affordably, establish a child care capital budget and work with communities to plan, fund and build new publicly-owned child care facilities – beginning with the immediate bulk purchase of custom-designed, high-quality modular child care buildings to be located on public land across the province.** Given the desperate need of families for more licensed spaces we recommend that government phase out its longstanding use of reactive, one-off capital grants to third parties, especially for-profit operators, to purchase/build individual, privately owned facilities. This outdated and ineffective approach is not supporting government to achieve its target of 22,000 new spaces or its overall commitment to a universal system.
- 2. Quality – to more substantially address the recruitment and retention crisis of Early Childhood Educators, who are essential to ensuring quality child care, we recommend an across-the-board wage lift of \$2/hour effective April 1, 2020** (rather than the \$1/hour increase already committed for 2020/21) and the development of a provincial wage grid, with harmonization.
- 3. Infrastructure – to align government’s commitment to a universal child care system with BC’s existing system of universal public K-12 education, we recommend that government announce the transfer of the Child Care Branch from the Ministry of Children and Family Development to the Ministry of Education.** This approach is consistent with the evidence, and the majority of Canadian provinces and territories, and it is incorporated into the \$10aDay Child Care Plan. To further delay the announcement of this necessary move leaves both the child care sector and the education sector in limbo.
- 4. Affordability – to ensure that parent fees are more affordable for everyone we recommend that government re-allocate this funding away from the planned expansion of the income-tested Affordability Benefit towards increasing the universal Fee Reduction Initiative and expanding the number of \$10 a day prototype sites, which are a huge success across the province.** We further recommend that government ensure child care providers pass on the full fee reduction to parents as too many families, notably in for-profit programs, report they are not receiving the full benefit of the fee reduction.
- 5. Implementation – to ensure that the number of families who have access to quality, affordable, licensed child care continues to grow, and the projected social and economic benefits³ are realized, we recommend that Budget 2020 include an increase in operating funding of \$200 million annually starting in fiscal 2020/21.⁴** This recommendation is consistent with the implementation modelling carried out for the \$10aDay Plan, which projects full implementation of quality, universal child care within 8 – 10 years.

We appreciate government will want to build on the initial success of *Child Care BC* and so we offer these five recommendations based on the urgent needs of families across the province. Our recommendations are supported by multiple benefit/cost analyses, an intersectional gender lens, and the best interests of BC’s children.

³ Multiple studies confirm the social and economic benefits associated with full implementation of the \$10aDay Plan. See, for example, https://www.10aday.ca/economic_study_2017

⁴ These figures do not include anticipated federal child care funding, not yet confirmed.

