



COALITION OF

# child care advocates

OF BC



*Working together for a community based, non-profit child care system that is high quality, affordable, accessible, publicly funded and accountable.*

## **The rEvolution of Community Controlled Child Care in BC**

*June 2008*

For many years the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) has advocated for a community-based, publicly funded, non-profit comprehensive child care system. We knew that child care needed to be planned, developed and delivered at the community level. We knew that it needed to respond to families' diverse needs. And, we knew that it needed to be democratically governed by and for communities.

But, beyond this we did not have detailed answers to the question "What do you mean by community-controlled child care?"

So, in 2006, the CCCABC launched our **Child Care Governance Project**.

Governance is not always easy to define. It is bigger than coordination of services; it's bigger than service delivery models and it's bigger than funding, management and administration. "When the Bough Breaks, a 1993 report on services for children, youth and families in Vancouver, describes governance as "the process by which citizens collectively solve their problems."

For us, 'governance' got a bit clearer when we compared child care to other community governed spaces and places that we all use - the library, the school, the park, the stop lights and the recreation centre. Of course, there are things about each of these services that could be better. But, they do exist in our communities and when they aren't there or when they are inadequate we expect action. Why is that?

Well, for starters, we agreed that these services should be funded and provided collectively. When we realized it was in everyone's interest that we all have access to books, we didn't give everyone a voucher to go buy their own. Rather, we allocated a portion of the funds that we all contribute through taxes to build and run libraries.

Then, we set out to deliver on the promise of access in an organized way. We didn't leave it up to groups of volunteer readers to build libraries. We didn't allow libraries to be built right next to each other rather than where they were most needed. Rather, we gave responsibility and resources for planning, building, running and improving libraries to an accountable group.

**But, nobody in BC has a clear mandate to plan, develop and deliver a comprehensive child care system that gives people a voice and is accountable for meeting community needs.**

So our project took the bold step of exploring what **good governance of child care** could look like.

We began by identifying key elements of the child care system we advocate for. These became a lens through which we examined the strengths and weaknesses of five different governance models. We looked at 3 child care models - Denmark, New Zealand, and Québec – and 2 models for governing other public or community services in BC – School Boards and Community Living BC. Then, we consulted with the community about the lessons learned and on how they apply to BC.

Over the course of the project, we realized that, to date, our governments have shown they are unable and unwilling to build a child care system. They have ignored the research that confirms we need a system. They have squandered resources that could have been used to start building a system. And, they have not allocated funds from healthy fiscal surpluses to build a system.

In the absence of government leadership, communities are taking up the challenge to meet the needs of children and families and to advocate for change. Their efforts inspired the main lesson of this project.

**BC communities have the knowledge, experience and commitment to deliver child care. Now it's time to give them the power, mandate, resources and tools to build and govern a community owned and controlled child care system.**

We propose that the place to start is with **Community Child Care Boards**.

Over time **Community Child Care Boards** would evolve into governing bodies with:

- **A mandate** to plan, develop and deliver child care services that meet the needs of their community.
- **Capital budgets** to create sufficient non-profit and/or publicly-owned spaces to meet community needs
- **Operating budgets** to sustain existing and new child care and
- **Decision-making processes** that hold them accountable to their communities.

As we learned from other models, there are many ways to create and empower such boards. But – their effectiveness depends of 3 fundamental conditions:

1. Community control over child care does not let senior levels of government off the hook. It is still government's job to enact legislation that ensures universal access; provide adequate, stable budgets for child care, and establish standards for equity, quality, access and inclusion.
2. The mandate, responsibility and resources need to go to those with the knowledge, experience and commitment to build a child care system. This responsibility is too important to offload on those who don't want it or don't care.
3. The priority of Community Child Care Boards must be to develop and deliver a child care system that promotes healthy child development **and** meets the needs of working families.

With these conditions in place, the next step is for communities to explore how best to develop democratic and accountable ways of making decisions.

Through this exploration, communities can and will answer questions about the role of School Boards or Municipal Councils, about whether existing inter-sectoral tables like Children First or Success by Six can evolve into governing bodies, and even whether Community Child Care Boards can or should be elected.

BC's recent decision to explore the extension of full school day Kindergarten for 3-5 year olds makes the conversation about a community controlled system that meets the needs of children and working families more timely than ever.

We can't wait to hear what you have to say. We invite you to 'imagine' and build with us.

See the full Report *The rEvolution of Community Controlled Child Care* at [http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabcdocs/governance/ggcc\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabcdocs/governance/ggcc_final_report.pdf)

Please send comments, ideas and suggestions to [info@cccabc.bc.ca](mailto:info@cccabc.bc.ca).

You can also check out our website at [www.cccabc.bc.ca](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca)

We look forward to hearing from you.

*Is your community  
exploring the  
development of a child  
care planning board?*

*If so, and you would like  
to share your story with  
others, please contact*

*[info@cccabc.bc.ca](mailto:info@cccabc.bc.ca)*