



Media Release - May 12, 2014

Child Care in BC: 15,000 More Children but only 2,000 More Spaces + Higher Parent Fees = Ongoing Crisis

The BC government's recent announcement of capital funding to support the creation of 1,000 new spaces by March 31, 2015, with an additional 1,000 the following year, highlights one of the major weaknesses of BC's 'Early Years Strategy'. Only 18% of children under age 12 have access to a child care space in BC today. Given that the child population is expected to increase by at least 15,000 (2013–2016), adding only 2,000 spaces means overall access will be even lower, not higher. Plus, parent fees in BC currently range from an average of \$9,000 annually for preschoolers to almost \$13,000 for younger children, and fees are increasing by 6% annually, on average. Clearly, the BC government is not addressing the serious crisis in child care, and overall family affordability, in our province today.

To further illustrate the weakness of BC's 'Early Years Strategy' consider, by comparison, Manitoba's new Child Care Plan. While both provincial governments identify key issues that need action - access (spaces), affordability (parent fees) and quality (staff training, and wages that support recruitment and retention) - that's where the similarity ends:

Access - although Manitoba's child population is one-third of BC's, the Government of Manitoba's Plan commits to 5,000 new child care spaces over 5 years. The BC government commits 2,000 over 2 years.

Affordability - while affordability is a concern in both provinces, parent fees in Manitoba are capped at \$5,172 annually for children aged 2-5. BC fees are not capped. They're twice as high as Manitoba fees, and on average increasing at rates that far exceed inflation. The BC 'Early Years Strategy' does not make child care more affordable, as the promised introduction of an Early Childhood Tax Credit of \$55 per month starting in 2015 will barely cover the projected fee increase.

Quality - in addition to more training funds, the Manitoba Plan provides a 2% annual increase in operating funds to child care providers to further increase staff wages. The BC 'Early Years Strategy' re-introduces previously cancelled training funds (bursary program), with no increase to operating funds.

"Ironically, the BC government proclaimed May 15 Child Care Provider Appreciation Day" observes Susan Harney, Chairperson of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC). "While it's important to honour providers, the child care crisis in BC demands more than words and photo ops. The \$10/day Plan does just that."

Developed by the CCCABC in partnership with the Early Childhood Educators of BC, and supported by municipalities and organizations representing almost 2 million British Columbians, our \$10/day Plan provides a quality, affordable space for all those who need or want one. When the \$10/day Plan is implemented, we can all look forward to a real celebration - let's call it "Families with Young Children Appreciation Day".