



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

Federal Pre-Budget Consultation 2014

Submitted: August 6, 2014

The evidence demonstrating the social and economic benefits of universal access to quality, affordable child care is now so well-established, **the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC is confident that the introduction of a pan-Canadian child care system is the only program the federal government could introduce that would simultaneously advance all of the themes proposed for the 2014 pre-budget consultations.** Specifically:

1. Supporting families and helping vulnerable Canadians by focusing on health, education and training – across the socioeconomic spectrum, families with young children today are struggling to balance work and family life. A pan-Canadian child care system will: reduce the health costs associated with work/life stress; increase educational opportunities for young children, enable parents who need access to affordable child care to participate in training and education programs; make family life more affordable in Canada, particularly for those living in poverty.
2. Ensuring prosperous and secure communities, including through support for infrastructure – while existing schools, recreation centres, child care facilities and other public buildings provide a starting point for the community infrastructure required to build a system, given the lack of child care spaces (outside of Quebec) significantly more community infrastructure will be required. As with other infrastructure developments, building a pan Canadian child care system will create short and long term community based jobs. Access to welcoming spaces for children and families in neighbourhoods across the country also helps to build the social cohesion that underpins truly secure communities. And, when parents are supported with opportunities to work, go to school and/or volunteer, communities prosper.
3. Maximizing the number and types of jobs for Canadians – Canadian women are well-educated and highly skilled. Many employers have also invested substantially in recruitment, and developing their careers. Yet, without affordable child care, mothers are particularly likely to leave the workforce, or reduce their participation. Building a pan-Canadian child care system will: support all parents, particularly women and those in poverty, to participate in the workforce; promote entrepreneurship by parents with young children, helping to create jobs for others; and build a well-educated and socially valued early childhood education workforce.
4. Increasing the competitiveness of Canadian businesses through research, development, innovation and commercialization – all these attributes of a strong, competitive economy rely on people and, as mentioned above, lack of access to affordable child care is a key barrier for Canada's young workers. Child care fees outside of Quebec frequently exceed the cost of post-secondary education, and in BC they are the second highest expense for young families (next to housing). Parents with (or hoping to have) young children are faced with the difficult decision of either not fully participating in the workforce, or participating and experiencing substantial work/life conflict and debt. Either way, Canadian businesses lose out on the bright young minds that could help advance research, development, innovation and commercialization. Multiple studies show that Canadian families and our economy pay a heavy price.

5. Improving Canada’s taxation and regulatory regimes, and balancing the federal budget to ensure fiscal sustainability and economic growth – experience in Quebec and elsewhere shows that public investment in broad access to affordable child care pays for itself in the near term due to increased labour force participation and reduced social costs, with related economic growth. Consistent analyses also point to even higher returns to society and the economy over the medium to long term. For these reasons – along with those outlined above - immediate public investment is warranted, with a goal of reaching 1% of GDP as recommended internationally.

The required public investment could be deficit financed, knowing payback is prompt, and/or it could be financed by reallocating funds from other programs. Each of these options could be complemented with a third option, which is to improve Canada’s taxation regime by making it more progressive and by using it to create the fiscal space needed to invest in effective public systems such as child care. Increasing taxes for higher-income individuals, for example, and using those funds to build child care are two effective ways to simultaneously reduce the growing inequality in Canada.

Regarding regulatory regimes, building a pan-Canadian child care system requires both federal leadership and collaboration with provinces, territories and First Nations. The latter groups have jurisdiction over the design and delivery of their services, and will be encouraged to work with communities to develop the quality, universal child care that best meets local needs.

In BC, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC have partnered to propose *The Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning*, commonly known as the \$10/day Plan. The Plan builds on national and international research that demonstrates public spending on the early years is a wise social and economic investment and that quality child care IS early learning. This “made-in BC” Plan incorporates the best of child care and the best of public education. It addresses the urgent need to provide children and families with quality, affordable early care and learning services – along with more generous parental leave provisions. The Plan is now supported by organizations representing almost 2 million British Columbians, including various Chambers of Commerce, the Surrey Board of Trade and Vancity Credit Union.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written input to the 2014 pre-budget consultation process. For more information on the \$10/day Plan, see www.cccabc.bc.ca/plan and for more information on the research and evidence in support of the above recommendations, see <http://www.childcarecanada.org/>

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) is a voluntary, non-profit organization of parents, child care workers, interested citizens and community organizations. Our advocacy for a publicly funded, high quality, affordable child care system is based on extensive evidence and on the lived experiences of BC families, and our goals are supported by a significant majority of Canadians who recognize that what is good for children and families is also good for Canada’s economic, social and environmental well-being.