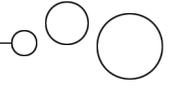


COALITION OF

**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.

October 2017

Submission to the BC Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

For BC families with young children the child care crisis is as serious as the housing crisis.

In its 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 reports, the Provincial Standing Committee on Finance recommended to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Provide funding and support for the development and implementation of an affordable, accessible and high-quality child care plan.

2013: #57 and 2014: #40 and 2015: #34 and 2016: #34

In the 2017 provincial election a majority of BC voters chose the BC NDP or BC Greens, each of whom committed to substantial investments in child care. In fact, in both cases it was the largest area of new spending in their platforms. In its subsequent Throne Speech, the BC Liberals also made a commitment to significant new child care investment.

With all three major political parties now publicly committed to new child care funding, British Columbia's families with young children can finally look forward to meaningful progress on implementing an evidence-based plan to solve the current child care chaos in our province – the \$10aDay Plan.

Current Child Care Chaos

BC invests less in early education and care than the Canadian average, and Canada invests less than other wealthy countries, falling far short of the minimum public investment levels recommended by UNICEF and the OECD. The result is a fragmented patchwork of child care programs that fails to meet the needs of BC familiesⁱ.

A recent snapshot in BCⁱⁱ:

570,200 children
with 363,800 employed mothers
but only 106,700 licensed child care spaces

- **High costs:** BC has the second highest fees in Canada, with average fees in Vancouver for children under 6 ranging from \$986 to \$1458 per monthⁱⁱⁱ. Subsidies for low-income parents are far less than the cost of care and have been frozen for more than ten years. Meanwhile, parent fees have risen faster than inflation.
- **Long wait lists:** BC has only enough licensed child care spaces for approximately 20% of children. Where vacancies exist, it's not because families don't need the care, it's because they can't afford the fees.
- **Women forced to abandon paid work and career goals:** The lack of affordable child care is a significant barrier for mothers who want to return to work or pursue their education; this contributes to gender inequality and weakens the BC economy. BC continues to have one of the lowest labour force participation rates of mothers in Canada.
- **Reliance on unregulated child care:** Because of high parent fees and lack of licensed spaces, some parents turn to unregulated child care where there are no training requirements, health and safety standards, monitoring or oversight. The death of Baby Mac in unlicensed illegal care is evidence of this unhealthy situation.
- **Low wages for early childhood educators:** Their median wage is 19% lower than that of BC workers overall, which leads to high turnover and chronic staff shortages, and contributes to financial insecurity of educators, many of whom are women with children of their own. Recruitment and retention of early childhood educators is a major challenge across the province.
- **Rollback of Existing Regulation:** Despite overwhelming expert evidence on the importance of increasing outdoor play space to support healthy child development; in 2016 the former BC government reduced the required outdoor play space in child care programs from 7 square meters to 6 square meters per child.

The Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning – known as the \$10aDay Plan – is the Solution

The detailed public policy and funding proposals which ground the \$10aDay Child Care Plan for BC are key to addressing affordability issues for all families with (or hoping to have) young children, and central to an effective poverty reduction plan. British Columbians are calling on government to implement it.

Support for the \$10aDay Plan is unprecedented and includes:

48 municipal and regional governments from across BC
31 Boards of Education
Vancity Credit Union
United Way of the Lower Mainland
Major labour unions in BC
Small businesses
Union of BC Indian Chiefs
Hundreds of community organizations
More than 17,000 individuals
Chambers of Commerce
Surrey Board of Trade
Medical Health Officers Council of BC
Academics
Politicians
Senators
and many, many more.

(list of organizational supporters attached)

Proposed \$10aDay Implementation Actions:

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC proposes concrete, balanced, evidence-based actions that allow government to begin fulfilling their child care commitment in Budget 2018.

These actions support existing BC child care services to participate in building the effective system that BC parents, grandparents, and employers have been waiting for.

Implementing these first steps require the BC government to confirm the multi-lateral and bi-lateral child care agreements with the federal government, and to conclude child care discussions with the BC Green Caucus. These first steps to reduce today's child care chaos in BC are consistent with the election platforms of both the BC NDP and BC Greens.

Budget 2018 Recommendations

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC to the BC Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

1. Deliver Tangible Benefits to Families, by:

- **Reducing parent fees** in all licensed infant & toddler programs by \$500 per month, with funding delivered directly to programs through the Child Care Operating Fund.
- **Eliminating parent fees** in licensed programs for families with annual incomes of less than \$40,000, with funding delivered through the Child Care Operating Fund.
- **Creating 22,500 new licensed spaces in 3 years.** Working collaboratively with municipalities, boards of education, early years planning tables and the child care community, government will carry out an immediate review of all planned and existing public and community spaces across BC, assessing the potential for, and prioritizing, opportunities to re-purpose, retrofit or modify existing space and to add child care to proposed building plans.

2. Invest in the Workforce by Supporting:

- **Early Childhood Educators** with a certificate-to-practice and working in licensed child care programs, by increasing their wages by \$1 per hour.
- **Caregivers without a certificate-to-practice**, including unlicensed providers, through an increase in bursary funds to help them become Early Childhood Educators.
- **Early Childhood Educators who have left the child care sector**, by initiating an intensive recruitment and re-entrance strategy.

The actions listed above – to reduce fees, raise ECE wages and education levels, and create new spaces, all in licensed child care – should start in 2018 and be expanded in years 2 and 3 of the 2018 Budget. These actions should be incorporated within a 3 year detailed plan for achieving measurable progress on child care affordability, quality and access, within a high level, long term plan for achieving a fully universal system.

The 3 Year Child Care Plan Should Include:

- **An incremental increase to child care funding** over the budget planning period (2018/19 to 2020/21), starting with \$225 million in year 1 (which includes approximately \$50 million in new annual federal funding) and reaching \$450 million in year 3.
- **An affordability strategy for reducing all parent fees** over time, towards achieving the goal of \$10aDay for full-time care, \$7 per day for part-time care, and no user fee for families with an annual income of less than \$40,000.
- **A workforce development strategy** that addresses Early Childhood Educator compensation and education, in order to recruit and retain respected, valued, well-educated and appropriately-compensated professionals. The strategy will include a plan to educate sufficient Early Childhood Educators as outlined in the \$10aDay Plan, including bursaries and other supports for caregivers committed to transitioning from unlicensed to licensed child care.
- **An infrastructure strategy** to ensure that effective supports and oversight functions – including, but not limited to, Child Care Resource & Referral services, Supported Child Development, Community Care Licensing, planning & evaluation, etc. – are appropriately staffed and resourced, and to plan for and implement the transition of child care from the Ministry of Children and Family Development to the Ministry of Education.

ⁱ Excerpts from Solving BC's Affordability Crisis in Child Care: Financing the \$10 a day plan. July, 2015. Iglia Ivanova, BC Office, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Office/2015/07/ccpa-bc-solving-childcare-summary_0.pdf

ⁱⁱ Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2014, Friendly, Grady, Macdonald, Forer, December 2015, Child Care Resource and Research Unit

<http://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/ECEC-2014-full-document-revised-10-03-16.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre 2017 Fee Survey

[http://www.wstcoast.org/pdf/feesurvey/2016GDCCFee%20SurveyResult%20\(Public\).pdf](http://www.wstcoast.org/pdf/feesurvey/2016GDCCFee%20SurveyResult%20(Public).pdf)