

## Why We Urge Child Care Providers to Opt In to the New Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative:

### A Joint Statement by the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and Early Childhood Educators of BC

March 8, 2018

The BC government's *Child Care BC* strategy provides an opportunity for child care providers to receive more direct operating funding (CCOF), with accountability measures, to begin building a universal child care system. This approach is supported by the research, well underway in many other wealthy countries and Canadian provinces, and consistent with the widely-endorsed \$10aDay Child Care Plan. We urge all child care providers to apply to join the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative promptly so that they can receive additional funds to reduce parent fees and participate in building a system of high quality, affordable child care in BC.

Here are some key points to consider:

1. Change can be challenging and will take time but the status quo – with unaffordable parent fees, low ECE wages, and too few licensed spaces - is unacceptable.
2. As proposed in the [\\$10aDay Plan](#), government's approach in *Child Care BC* includes all existing providers – licensed and unlicensed, centre-based, multi-age, and family, not-for-profit and for-profit – and supports them with additional resources to enhance affordability, quality, and access.
3. First steps on affordability, for those who opt-in to new Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative are:
  - A long overdue 10% lift in base CCOF funding
  - Additional funding to cover 100% of the required parent fee reduction

On the application forms, providers are asked to provide recent data on parent fees as well as planned increases for 2018/19. If approved for the Initiative, providers agree not to increase fees beyond their planned levels without prior approval from the Ministry.

4. In addition to the Fee Reduction Initiative, *Child Care BC* includes additional resources for a workforce development strategy that includes ECE compensation and, later this year, an Affordable Child Care Benefit that will replace and expand on the current child care subsidy system. We continue to urge government to address ECE compensation promptly, and to ensure that the new affordability measures are effective for both families and providers.

5. Since launched 7 years ago the \$10aDay Plan has generated unprecedented support. When people had questions or concerns, we invited them to offer alternative solutions. Although no complete alternative has emerged, 2 ideas continue to float around:
  - a) Simply increase parent fee subsidies – this approach hasn't worked in BC in the past, nor has it worked anywhere else. [Raising fee subsidies leads to higher parent fees](#).
  - b) Introduce kindergarten for 4-year-old children, and perhaps 3-year-old children - while the \$10aDay Plan calls for moving child care into the Ministry of Education, lowering the age of kindergarten ignores the needs of families with younger children and the full-time child care needs of families with 3- and 4-year-old children. It simply extends the existing stress for families trying to find before and after school care. It also undermines – or may even eliminate – existing child care providers who've worked for many years trying to provide quality, affordable care without adequate public funding support. Instead, the \$10aDay Plan integrates the strengths of public education (direct public funding, universal access, and qualified, fairly-compensated teachers) with the strengths of existing child care services. Government's *Child Care BC* strategy incorporates key elements of the \$10aDay approach.
6. There may be some providers who choose not to join the new system. The current high-demand, low supply market may serve their business interests or they may have concerns about accountability for the new operating funds. Without these new funds, their fees may be higher than average. However, from a taxpayer perspective, it makes sense that more public funding is tied to more public accountability.
7. Once information about the Child Care Fee Initiative is clarified, most providers will likely opt in because they are committed to making high quality, affordable child care available to all families who choose it. In fact, many are eager to opt in because they recognize the child care sector is changing and they can pass on benefits to families promptly.
8. Moving from the current child care chaos to a high quality, cohesive system requires change from all of us. As we said in the \$10aDay Plan it “will take generosity of spirit, community engagement and vigilance and an openness to learn through practice – and make adjustments as needed.”
9. It's important to remember that the fee reduction is a first step to building a quality, affordable child care system for BC. It is essential that the next steps address workforce issues for educators, including the need for increased compensation, along with more licensed spaces.
10. For information about the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative, call MCFD toll free at [1 888 338-6622](tel:18883386622). For general inquiries regarding Child Care BC, contact [earlyyears@gov.bc.ca](mailto:earlyyears@gov.bc.ca).