

## FACT SHEET



## FACT SHEET FOR BC PARENTS

### What the plan means for families

In 2011, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates and the Early Childhood Educators of BC released a **Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning**. The Plan offers a concrete, innovative ‘made in BC’ solution to the child care crisis facing families with young children.

If and when government puts the Plan in place, child care will cost families \$10 a day for a full-time program, \$7 a day for part-time, and will be free for families with annual incomes under \$40,000. Every young child will have the right to participate in quality early care and learning programs that meet their needs. It will be up to families to choose what services work for them.

With new investments from the province, locally elected school boards will provide early care and learning programs in their communities with the operating funds they need to deliver quality programs. Early childhood educators will receive the respect and remuneration they deserve. Learn more about the Plan at [www.ecebc.ca/news/integrated\\_project.html](http://www.ecebc.ca/news/integrated_project.html)

*Fact Sheet for BC Parents*, the first fact sheet in a series that provides contextual information for the Plan, highlights what the plan means for families.

### SOLVING YOUR ‘CHILD CARE CRISIS’

If you are a BC parent in the labour force and have a young child—chances are it’s been hard for you to find affordable, quality child care. And, if you have found a child care arrangement that works for you—chances are you feel ‘lucky’ even though you are all too aware of the high cost of care.

It’s important to remember that most BC families with young children are also experiencing a child care crisis. Did you know that:

- Canada ranks last among developed countries in supporting quality early care and learning programs?
- BC has licensed child care spaces for only about 20 per cent of children.
- Fees are high because—unlike libraries, parks and schools that receive public funds to cover most of operating costs—child care is primarily a user fee service.
- Even high fees paid by parents aren’t enough to pay early childhood educators a living wage, so many have to find other work to support their families.

No wonder it’s hard for you and other BC families to solve the child care crisis.

The Community Plan is the solution to the current child care crisis in BC. It offers a solution that honours the right of BC children and families to access quality early care and learning programs when and where they need them.

**The Community Plan is the solution  
to the child care crisis in BC.**



If our Plan is implemented, you will be able to access the early care and learning programs you need without worrying about high fees, long waiting lists or untrained staff.



## THE PLAN PUTS YOUR NEEDS FIRST

Today, BC child care providers connect on a daily basis with the families of over 95,000 children. This makes child care the biggest front line family support service. Yet, it remains one of the least supported by government.

The central goal of the new system of early care and learning proposed in the Community Plan is to make sure this service works for you and your children.

That is why every element of the proposed Plan—from extended parental leave, to strong family policies, enabling legislation and adequate funding—is designed to support high quality, affordable, inclusive early care and learning services in your community.

If the system proposed in our Plan is implemented, you and all BC families will be able to access the early care and learning programs you need without worrying about high fees, long waiting lists, untrained staff, or the infrastructure that makes it possible.

## THE PLAN CALLS FOR IMPORTANT POSITIVE CHANGES

Some highlights of the proposed new system include:

- **AFFORDABLE PARENT FEES:** The Plan proposes a new public investment that will bring your fees down to \$10 a day for a full-time program, and \$7 a day for a part-time program. Programs will be free for families with annual incomes under \$40,000. And, with this increased public funding—the education levels and wages of early childhood educators and family child care providers will go up.
- **THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE:** Under a proposed new Early Care and Learning Act, every BC child under the age of 5 will have the right to participate in a high quality early care and learning program. Every child from 6 to 12 years of age will have the right to participate in a high quality before and after school care program. Children with extra support needs will be fully included as will children facing economic, social or other barriers. You, and other parents in your community, will have the right to be actively involved in the programs you choose for your children.
- **A NEW HOME IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION:** The Plan proposes that all early care and learning programs be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. This does NOT mean that children would start school before the age of 5. Rather, the Plan proposes publicly funded, high quality, universally accessible programs that are designed to meet the particular needs of families and young children before they start school.
- **EARLY YEARS CENTRE NETWORKS:** The Plan proposes a new name—Early Years Centres (EYC)—for programs that offer full-time (daycare) and part-time (preschool) programs for children before they start Kindergarten. EYCs will be in centre and family home settings, staffed by well educated early childhood educators. They will offer play-based programs that give your child a strong foundation. The EYCs in your community will work together as a network—offering you a full range of choices.



So far, our province has treated 'care' and 'learning' differently.

## WITHOUT 'CARE' ... THERE IS NO 'LEARNING'

Children learn through play in caring relationships and supportive environments. They need and have a right to positive and nurturing early experiences.

BC families need and have a right to access quality, affordable child care so they can work, study and participate in community life.

So, it makes sense to offer the 'care' that families need through quality programs that support young children and lay positive foundations for their development.

But—so far—our province has treated 'care' and 'learning' differently.

Child care is seen as a private responsibility. And, given the shortage of licensed spaces, many families have no choice but to use unregulated care.

Yet, government funds and encourages 'early learning' programs, such as StrongStart, that are offered by school boards. These are free for families who are able to participate with their children and are staffed by early childhood educators. The problem is that these part-time 'early learning' programs rarely meet the needs of families when adults are in the labour force.

## That's why our Plan integrates 'care' and 'learning' into one seamless service

To do this, the Plan builds on the strengths of quality, community-based child care and the strengths of the public education system.

**FROM QUALITY CHILD CARE** the proposed new early care and learning system takes:

- Programs that are play-based and put care at the core;
- Respect for each child and their unique developmental journey;
- Diverse approaches that allow families to find a 'fit' with their values and culture—including Reggio Emilia, Parent Participation, Montessori, and others;
- Strong partnerships between families and early childhood educators; and
- Small, neighbourhood-based settings designed for young children.

**FROM PUBLIC EDUCATION** the proposed new early care and learning system takes:

- The right of every child to participate;
- Public funding;
- Democratic control; and
- A well educated, respected and fairly compensated workforce.

**The Plan builds on the strengths of quality, community-based child care and the strengths of the public education system.**



**If you have children in Kindergarten or Grade 1 who require before and after school care, the changes mean that your child's education and care will be in one location.**

**While the Plan is generating lots of interest, energy and support from groups and individuals across BC, it has not yet been endorsed by the provincial government.**

## WHAT WILL THESE CHANGES MEAN FOR YOU?

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That depends on your situation. If you already use licensed group or family child care and your provider opts into the new system, your current arrangements will continue. Your fees will go down and the education and wages of those who care for your child will go up.

- If you are one of the many BC families who can't find quality, affordable child care, the changes mean that, over time, you will be able to access quality, affordable options.
- If you have children in Kindergarten or Grade 1 who require before and after school care, the changes mean that your child's education and care will be in one location. Your child will be able to build consistent, stable relationships with a teacher and early childhood educators who together will offer a play-based program that supports learning.
- If your child is older (Grade 2 and up), you will be assured that a school age program will be provided at or close to your local school.

## THE CHOICE WILL BE YOURS

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One of the main differences between the new proposed early care and learning system and 'school' is that participation in any Early Years Centre program will be voluntary.

It will be up to you to decide whether your child attends an early care and learning program. And, if you decide to enroll your child, it will be up to you to decide when they start, whether they attend a full or part-time program, and whether the program is located in a group or family child care setting.

## WHEN DOES IT START?

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The Community Plan for Integrated Early Care and Learning was developed by two community organizations—the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC.

While the Plan is generating lots of interest, energy and support from groups and individuals across BC, it has not yet been endorsed by the provincial government.

If you think this Plan will work for you and your family—we encourage you to:

- Endorse it on line at [www.ecebc.ca/news/integrated\\_project.html](http://www.ecebc.ca/news/integrated_project.html)
- Encourage organizations you belong to—including your daycare or pre-school—to endorse the Plan; and
- Let your MLA know that you want government to adopt it and begin working with families and communities to make it happen.