

Ministry of Children and Family Development

# Child Care in British Columbia



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Development



# Introduction

The Government of British Columbia is committed to ensuring that all children have the best possible start in life. Government's vision for the province's children is that they are strong, safe and supported to reach their full potential. ***Child Care in British Columbia*** outlines the goals the Province has set forth and the co-ordinated steps taken to strengthen child care services and supports for children and to build capacity in the child care sector while improving options available to families. This plan, which outlines key goals, accomplishments and commitments, also recognizes that Aboriginal communities have an interest in developing culturally specific child care plans to meet the needs of their children, families and communities.

*Child care is fundamental to a prosperous economy. This government partners to create and support a sustainable child care system in which families can choose from a range of affordable, safe, quality child care options that meet diverse needs.*

From Fall 2005 to January 2006, the Ministries of Education and Children and Family Development engaged various stakeholders and community members in a series of public consultations. **Five principles** emerged with regard to priorities for child care funding in British Columbia:

1. **Accessibility**
2. **Quality**
3. **Human Resource Development**
4. **Integration, Co-location, Partnerships and Communities**
5. **Sustainability**

These five principles continue to inform government with regard to child care. Decision-making and policy have centred around ongoing support for operating funding, community child care planning, child care subsidies for lower and moderate income families, supported child development, capital funding and recruitment and retention of early childhood educators.

We participated in the Early Childhood Learning Agency's feasibility study to explore full-day kindergarten for five-year-olds and the introduction of early learning opportunities for three and four-year-olds. The results of the study will provide important information to government on early learning and care services and supports. The Ministry of Children and Family Development is also leading government's cross-ministry five year Early Years Plan, which includes child care and early childhood development.

# Child Care in British Columbia



## Message from the Minister of State for Child Care



The first years of a child's life set the stage for the years to come, and the quality of care children receive from parents, child care providers and community programs is critical to ensuring success in school and later in life. Whether in the home environment or at a regulated child care setting, all children require nurturing and enriching experiences throughout their early years to thrive and reach their full potential.

Government has taken action to help meet the demand for child care through targeted investments that sustain and expand access to child care programs and services. In 2008/2009, government investments in child care will reach almost \$300 million. Since 2003/2004, we have increased the number of licensed child care spaces by over twenty per cent – today funding approximately 90,000 licensed child care spaces in communities across British Columbia. Government provides subsidies to approximately 50,000 children from low and moderate income families each year to assist with the cost of child care.

We have worked hard over the last seven years to create a strong foundation for early childhood development, early learning and child care and we will continue to work with parents, child care providers, community partners, and across government to build on this foundation. We will also continue to support the co-location and integration of child care services across B.C. Government is committed to supporting a quality, accessible and sustainable child care system that meets the needs of children and their families in communities across the province.

As Minister of State for Child Care, I look forward to the continued collaboration that will realize our shared goals for strengthening children, youth, families and communities in British Columbia.

A stylized, cursive handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Reid'.

**Honourable Linda Reid**

Minister of State for Child Care

## Accessibility

### Principle 1

#### Increase the number of licensed child care spaces while improving access to existing services

*Families have access to child care services that meet the needs of children of all abilities from all cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds. Parent choice is a key priority in developing services for families in communities across British Columbia.*

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**Outcome:** Children and families have access to a range of quality early learning and child care programs and services within their own communities.

#### Priority Actions

- Support the creation of new child care spaces, fund emergency repair, replacement and relocation of child care services.
- Provide accessible child care subsidy for low and moderate income families.
- Provide funding for children with special needs to participate in child care programs, and resources to support child care programs that are culturally diverse.
- Support the sharing of resources and information amongst child care service providers regarding diversity and inclusion.

#### Key Successes to Date:

- Increased the number of licensed child care spaces to approximately 90,000, a lift of more than 6000 spaces.
- Significantly enhanced the Child Care Subsidy Program, including increasing subsidy rates and raising the income threshold from \$21,000 to \$38,000 for children under six in regulated child care.
- Funded more than 100 new projects through the Major Capital Funding Program and supported the creation of more than 2,000 new licensed child care spaces with an investment of \$12.5 million in 2007/2008.
- Created over 900 new licensed family child care spaces to date in 2008/09 through the Major Capital Funding Program which was expanded in 2007 to increase support to licensed family child care providers to create new licensed child care spaces.



## Quality

### Principle 2

#### Enhance the quality and standards of child care programs and services

*Child care supports the emotional, social, cognitive and physical skills that are necessary for healthy child development and learning. The Government of British Columbia will positively impact the quality and safety of child care programs and services throughout the province supporting safe, stimulating environments that promote children's healthy development, learning, and growth.*

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**Outcome:** Safe, healthy, and developmentally appropriate environments support children and families to thrive.

#### Priority Actions

- Assist child care providers with gaining access to resources that enhance quality.
- Provide information and support to encourage the delivery of quality child care.
- Work with the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport to ensure that provincial licensing standards reflect best practice.
- Promote quality and performance through the use of evaluation.

#### Key Successes to Date:

- Allocated \$40 million in funding to support licensed child care providers to enhance the quality of child care with investments in professional development, minor capital improvements, and to purchase equipment and supplies.
- Completed an evaluation of the Child Care Resource and Referral Program.
- Supported the University of Victoria's Investigating Quality Project to promote the active engagement of early childhood educators, university instructors, researchers, and policy-makers on quality early childhood care.



## Human Resource Development

### Principle 3

#### Increase the capacity of the child care sector to deliver quality programs and services

*Develop capacity in B.C.'s child care sector by supporting recruitment and retention and professional development opportunities for early childhood educators and other child care providers. We continue to focus on investments for early learning and child care professionals, introducing programs and initiatives to support their recruitment, retention and ongoing professional development.*

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**Outcome:** Well-trained and knowledgeable professionals support children to reach their fullest potential.

#### Priority Actions

- Invest in initiatives to recruit and retain skilled early childhood educators (ECEs).
- Provide funding for student bursaries to assist with the costs of ECE basic or post basic programs.
- Provide financial assistance for new graduates employed as early childhood educators reducing their student loan debt through the Loan Assistance Program.
- Support changes in, and the implementation of, an updated licensing regulation.
- Provide resources for facilitating access to professional development and training opportunities.

#### Key Successes to Date:

- Developed two initiatives to promote the attraction, recruitment and retention of qualified early childhood educators: the ECE Incentive Grant and the B.C. ECE Loan Assistance Programs.
- Amendments to the licensing regulation enables early childhood educators to apply for a one-year Licence to Practice while completing the required work experience.
- Provided nearly \$3.5 million in grants to the Vancity Community Foundation to support early childhood educators in professional development programs, training opportunities and bursaries.
- Funded the Western Canada Family Child Care Association of B.C. to provide professional development and training supports for family child care providers.





# Integration, Co-location, Partnerships and Communities

## Principle 4

### **Improve the supports available to help families, child care providers and communities to build on their strengths**

*The Province will seek opportunities to develop innovative and creative partnerships improving collaboration across ministries, municipalities, school districts, and community agencies to better provide an integrated continuum of child development services. Government will promote the development of neighbourhood hubs where early childhood development, child care, and family services are co-located to help meet family and community needs.*

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**Outcome:** Children and families are supported in their communities by a strong network of family-centred, community-based, inclusive and integrated early childhood development and child care services.

#### **Priority Actions**

- Establish additional neighbourhood hubs where families can access a range of early childhood development services maximizing the use of under-utilized public spaces such as schools.
- Support community-based organizations to provide information, resources, and support services to parents and child care providers.
- Assist families and child care providers to connect with their communities and family support services by increasing linkages between child care services; integrating and co-locating community resources within schools, better utilizing existing resources and fostering partnerships.

#### **Key Successes to Date:**

- Partnered with the BC Housing Corporation to support the creation of new licensed child care spaces in social housing developments.
- Funded the creation of over thirty neighbourhood hubs across British Columbia; creating new child care spaces, strengthening existing services and allowing local service providers, school districts, and health authorities to work together to provide services in one location.
- Provided funding for 41 Child Care Resource and Referral Centres to support parents and child care providers, including the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society which provides culturally-specific training courses and other resources.
- Continued to lead the development of a five-year cross-ministry Early Years Strategic Plan to ensure the coordination of services and supports for early learning programs.
- Supported the Ministry of Education in the development of 180 StrongStart Centres, which have plans to expand to 200 by June 2009.

## Sustainability

### Principle 5

#### Provide equitable and predictable child care funding

*Provincial investments in child care focus on community strengths ensuring that child care programs and services are sustainable and able to accommodate changing needs and priorities. By investing in a range of early childhood development and child care programs and services, government contributes to assisting with the demand for child care.*

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**Outcome:** A continuum of early childhood development and child care services support vibrant, connected and responsive communities.

#### Priority Actions

- Provide child care operating funding.
- Target funding in child care services to vulnerable and underserved communities, particularly in Aboriginal, rural and isolated areas.
- Engage in collaborative planning to develop shared, long-term, sustainable goals and an integrated, coordinated system for program delivery.
- Support community-based organizations that provide information, resources and supports to families and child care providers.

#### Key Successes to Date

- Supported the child care subsidy program, serving approximately 50,000 children each year from low and moderate income families.
- The Supported Child Development program budget has been maintained at its current amount supporting nearly 9,000 children with special needs to participate in child care settings across B.C.
- Expanded the Major Capital Funding Program in 2007/08 to include licensed family child care providers. The Province has supported the creation of more than 900 new licensed family spaces to date in 2008/09.
- Invested nearly \$7 million in capital projects for licensed Aboriginal child care spaces since 2003.







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