

Early Learning and Child Care in British Columbia



A Consultation Paper

Ministry of Children and Family Development
Ministry of Education
November 2005



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In September 2005, the Governments of British Columbia and Canada signed a historic five-year agreement to support and strengthen the province's early learning and child care programs and services. Under this new agreement, British Columbia will receive a total of \$633.3 million to devote to early learning and child care initiatives. This represents about \$130 million per year over the five years of the agreement. These new resources will greatly enhance early learning and child care services in BC and support the achievement of the government's goals for the next decade.

BC's Goals

- To make BC the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent.
- To lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness.
- To build the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, special needs, children at risk and seniors.
- To lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the fisheries management.
- To create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada.

The Early Years

The years between birth and age six are a critical time in a child's life. The nurturing that occurs in early childhood influences health, well-being and learning skills for a lifetime. By investing in the early years we are investing in the future health and well-being of British Columbians for decades to come.

Early childhood development refers to the period of a child's growth that takes place from the moment of conception until the child is six years old and typically ready to enter school.

Early learning takes place in a variety of settings: at home, in preschools, in child care, in kindergarten, and in other community settings.

A Vision for Early Learning and Child Care

British Columbia is committed to giving children the best future possible by increasing supports available for child care, early childhood development programs and early learning programs, all of which should increase the proportion of children entering school ready to learn.

In this context of this broader vision, BC's vision for early learning and child care is:

Access to quality early learning and child care in all BC communities that meet the needs of all young children and their families.

In order to achieve this vision, BC has identified the following objectives for early learning and child care:

- more children will enter school better prepared to succeed
- more BC families will have access to quality child care
- more families will have access to a range of early learning programs and services
- more children with special needs will be supported in order to be included in quality community-based child care settings
- more children will be cared for by qualified child care workers in regulated child care spaces
- more BC families will have access to community hubs where a range of integrated family services are located.

We Want Your Input

We are seeking your input on government's priorities for young children, and their families, and the allocation of resources to ensure:

- More families will have access to quality child care options so they can contribute to their communities by working, volunteering, and becoming better educated.
- A greater proportion of children will enter school with optimal development, ready to be successful in Kindergarten.

We are seeking the advice and comments of stakeholders and interested parties across the province. The results of this consultation process will help create a detailed action plan for early learning and child care in BC and inform spending decisions in years two to five of the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. The consultation process will have two components, website consultation and face-to-face community meetings around BC. Please see the final page of this document for more details about how you can provide input.

BC at a Glance

Population Data

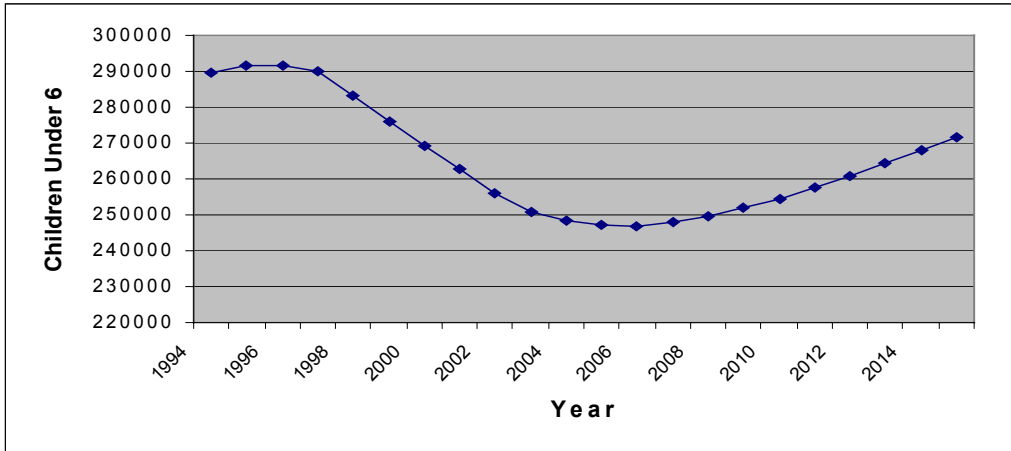
British Columbia is home to an estimated 593,000 children under 13 and 247,000 under six years of age¹. An estimated 246,000 or 42% of children under 13 are cared for by others while their parents work, attend education and training, or volunteer².

Over the next ten years it is anticipated that the demand for child care will increase as the number of children under age six continues to grow (See following graph). Providing these children with the best start possible remains our priority.

¹ BC Stats, People 29

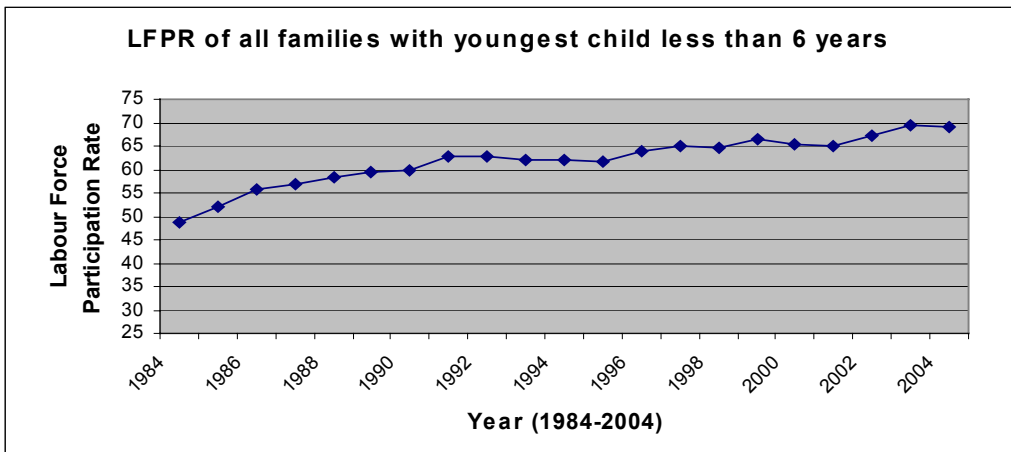
² 2003 Child Care Parent Survey

Projected Population of Children Under 6



Labour Force Participation:

The labour force participation rate of parents with children under 6 years of age is approximately 70%.³ (See the following graph).



In addition, the workforce participation of mothers is directly related to the age of their children.

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child⁴:	
Age of Youngest Child	% of Mothers in Workforce
0-2	67.4%
3-5	73.5%
6-15	78.7%

³ Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey Annual Averages: Prepared by BC Stats October 2005

⁴ Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2004, Child Care Resource and Research Unit: University of Toronto

The combined impact of more parents working, particularly women with young children, and the increased number of children under age six will further increase the demand for access to quality child care in BC.

ELCC Agreement in the BC Context

To shape “made in BC” early learning and child care services that will best meet the needs of British Columbians, and move us forward towards the achievement of government's five goals, this government recognized that we need to invest strategically in providing our children with the best start possible.

The 2005 early learning and child care (ELCC) agreement is founded on a framework which is focused on results, builds on best practices and reports on progress to Canadians. The framework is based on the *four* QUAD principles.

- **Quality** – High quality early learning and child care supports optimal child development, by demonstrating evidence-based quality practices, including provincial/territorial regulation and monitoring, and an appropriate complement of staff and child care providers qualified in early learning and child care.
- **Universally Inclusive** – Universally inclusive early learning and child care is open and responsive, without discrimination, to young children, including children with special needs, Aboriginal children, and children with various cultural and linguistic circumstances. Diversity is respected and valued.
- **Accessible** – Accessible early learning and child care is broadly available to children and parents. It is also affordable to all parents who choose to use it.
- **Developmental** – Developmental early learning and child care demonstrates quality and contributes to improved lifetime outcomes for children by supporting social, emotional, physical and cognitive development and parents’ knowledge and involvement. Developmental early learning and child care is child centred, reflects family and community contexts and encourages meaningful partnerships between parents and child care providers.

In addition to the four QUAD principles, the BC government has adopted *three* additional principles for the province.

- **Choice /flexibility** – Parents choose a service that works best for them, including care outside of traditional work hours.
- **Targeted investments** – Targeting investments to low-income families and families with children with special needs promotes better access for more parents to quality inclusive child care.
- **Integrated services** – Child care is available in schools and is integrated with other community services such as early child development (ECD) programs.

This is a historic opportunity for BC's children. Over its five years, the ELCC agreement will enable the continued enhancement of a quality, made-in-BC system of early learning and child care that will address the province's unique requirements for diversity and flexibility and that will build on the strength of BC's existing programs. BC is committed to working closely with all interested stakeholders to ensure investments from the ELCC reflect the diverse needs and priorities across the province.

Fiscal Year	New Federal Funding for ELCC (\$ million)	Province of BC Budget Plan for ELCC (\$ million)
2005-2006	\$92.0*	\$55.2
2006-2007	\$85.6	\$122.4
2007-2008	\$151.7	\$151.7
Subtotal	\$329.3	\$329.3
2008-2009	\$151.9	\$151.9
2009-2010	\$152.1	\$152.1
Total	\$633.3	\$633.3

*37 M deferred to 2006/07

Towards Quality Early Learning and Child Care: Building Blocks

The new funding under the 2005 ELCC agreement offers an opportunity to build on the current early learning and child care programs and services. To take advantage of this opportunity the following seven building blocks are being considered for building integrated, flexible and accessible early learning and child care services across the province.

Child Care Subsidy

More subsidies are available to a greater number of parents of children under the age of 6 to access regulated child care and maximum subsidy amounts better reflect the cost of care.

Child care subsidy

Effective October 1, 2005.

- The annual income threshold for eligible parents increased from approximately \$21,000 to approximately \$38,000, or higher, depending on family circumstances.
- Increase in subsidy rates to better reflect cost of care.
- Funding for children who do not attend a licensed group or preschool setting to allow them to benefit from a preschool experience.

Child Care Operating Funding Program

Effective October 1, 2005.

- Increase of 36.6 per cent in operating funding for eligible licensed child care providers for services to children under six, to support a stable supply of child care spaces.
- Link future operating funding increases to quality enhancements

Child Care Capital Funding Program

Effective October 1, 2005.

Major Capital Funding

- Increase in the maximum funding amount of \$250,000 to \$300,000 to help communities create new licensed, group, non-profit child care spaces. Funding can be used for the purchase of buildings or land, for construction or renovation costs, or for equipment and furnishings.
- The proportion of provincial funding increased to 50 per cent for all communities.

Targeted Major Capital Grants

- New Targeted Major Capital Funding for Aboriginal communities and priority communities as identified by the Early Development Instrument (EDI). Funding of up to \$500,000, with a provincial contribution of up to 90 per cent, is available to help communities create new licensed, non-profit, group child care spaces.

Minor Capital Funding

- The maximum funding amount for minor capital funds increased from \$4,000 to \$5,000 to upgrade, repair or relocate existing facilities so that regulated, non-profit, group child care providers can maintain quality services for families in their communities. Funding of up to \$10,000 is available for providers with multiple licensed care types.

Supported Child Development

- Improving access to child care for children with special needs.
- Reducing wait times.
- Providing access to culturally appropriate Supported Child Development services for Aboriginal children.

Community Planning and Partnerships

- Community grant funding for community planning and development.
- Greater support and resources for Child Care Resource and Referral Centres.
- Integrated service delivery models for child care and early childhood development programs.

Human Resource Development

- Establish a body of knowledge about the provincial child care sector.
- Develop strategies to recruit, train and retain new and existing workers.

Early Learning Initiatives

- Families of preschool children have increased choice for early learning programs.
- New options for families developed.

Government Roles and Responsibilities

A number of ministries have a role in ensuring BC's children have the best start possible.

Ministry of Children and Family Development:

- Overarching mandate for programs to care for children and support families;
- Advancing options to enhance the availability, quality and choice related to child care;
- Minister of State is responsible for leading partnerships and promoting innovation in the child care community.

Ministry of Education:

- Public Education;
- Early Learning;
- Libraries;
- Health Promoting Schools; and,
- School-Community Connections

Ministry of Health:

- Support healthy child development through hearing, vision, dental screening programs;
- Public Health Services;
- ActNow; and,
- Licensing for Child Care.

Research Initiatives

British Columbia is committed to building early childhood development programs and services that are based on the best possible research. The Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), a consortium of six BC universities, provides critical evidence to guide early learning and child care investments.

One of the key tools developed by HELP is the EDI — a population based survey tool used to measure the physical health, social competence and emotional maturity of young children, their general knowledge and communication, language and cognitive skills. The EDI provides the average scores for groups of children and helps to determine the number of developmentally “vulnerable” children in a city, community or neighbourhood, and the types of vulnerability that they may represent.

EDI results, community assets and neighbourhood-based (socioeconomic) maps are being shared to communities across BC. This information will establish a baseline measure, indicate areas of strength and vulnerability and identify areas for key investments. This research will help school districts and communities target funds for programs and services. For government, the EDI analysis will increase understanding of the role of community factors in young children's early development, and provide direction for policy and investment.

Current statistics indicate that approximately 25 per cent of BC's children enter the school system requiring developmental support.

For further information including access to the EDI maps of the province visit:
<http://ecdportal.help.ubc.ca/>

Help Define the Future

We have a unique opportunity to enhance BC's early learning and child care services that will benefit our youngest citizens for years to come. The BC government will work with all levels of government and continue to consult with British Columbians and the early learning and child care community to help build a sustainable early learning and child care system in which families can choose from a range of affordable, flexible, high quality options that meet diverse needs.

As articulated by the Premier, we will work to support a new relationship with Aboriginal people. We recognise Aboriginal aspirations to provide services for their children in a culturally competent way and encourage Aboriginal groups across the province to contribute their input through this consultation process.

**To provide your input on Early Learning and Child Care
in BC please [click here](#)**

or

to provide written feedback send your comments to:

Child Care Policy Branch
PO Box 9778 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9S5

For more information on child care programs and services in British Columbia please visit www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare