

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

BC Budget 2027 Submission

Let BC Parents Work – Expand Access to Quality \$10aDay Child Care

Finance Minister Bailey says we must “protect core public services that people rely on every day” while “moving forward with major projects that put people to work, raise revenues and support strong communities.”

Child care is both a core service that British Columbians rely on and it allows parents to go to work, pay taxes, and support their families and strong communities.

To realize the government’s ambition of BC being an economic engine for Canada, we must be investing in more than just jobs for men. For women to participate equally in the work-force (be it mining, A.I., LNG, or other Projects of National and Provincial Significance) then the expansion of quality, affordable child care must be part of Look West and Build Canada Strong strategies.

The evidence is clear. Child care is not only a social program—it is economic infrastructure. The expansion of child care in British Columbia since 2019, as imperfect as it has been, has delivered substantial economic returns. More than 8,000 jobs have been created in the sector, and increased access to affordable care has supported a significant rise in women’s labour force participation, adding approximately 33,000 FTE workers to the provincial economy.

Overall, in 2024 this growth generated an additional \$1 billion in provincial government revenue - more than offsetting the provincial child care expenditures of \$865 million.

Sadly, British Columbia has the highest child care fees in Canada, and 75% of children have no access to licensed care. At the same time, educators are without the wage grid BC committed to in its 2021 Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

Only BC and the Yukon have neither capped fees for families nor introduced a wage grid for educators - ALL other provinces and territories have one or both! All the child care in Manitoba and Saskatchewan is \$10/day, the Alberta government set fees at \$15/day and even in Ontario the fees for families are capped at \$22/day – a reasonable step towards \$10aDay.

In BC we still have families paying up to \$100/day. Why is it that Alberta and Ontario can do more for their families when there is the same level of federal funding - and BC started its commitment to \$10aDay years earlier?

So, we offer 3 urgent priorities for Budget 2027.

Recommendation 1 – Affordability and Fairness

Ensure a maximum fee of \$10aDay in all publicly-funded child care programs across BC (replacing other funding streams), with a formula based on the BC Early Learning Framework.

Explanation

The province has created inequity by allowing only 10% of existing licensed spaces to cap parent fees at \$10aDay. These programs are “life-changing” for families. But, by making them so scarce government policy allowed \$10aDay spaces to be like winning the lottery - instead of doing what other provinces have done by implementing a low-capped fee province-wide.

A universal low-fee system is simpler, fairer, and more efficient than creating new income-testing requirements and administrative bureaucracy. For example, we don’t income test for kindergarten.

Recommendation 2 - Early Childhood Educators

Ensure a provincial wage grid for early childhood educators ranging from \$35–\$45/hour based on experience and credentials, with pensions and benefits (replacing the existing Wage Enhancement and Specialization Grant).

Explanation

Seven other provinces and territories have implemented wage grids for their ECEs. Across BC, programs close or are unable to operate at full capacity because they cannot recruit or retain qualified Educators. The current median wage for ECEs is still only \$30/hr.

BC’s current approach of hourly wage enhancements creates inequities between programs and uncertainty for employers and workers. Investing in Educators is essential to protect quality for children and support system expansion.

Recommendation 3 – Planning for Governance and Expansion

Ensure the Budget gives school districts the mandate and sufficient dedicated resources to create local plans for the equitable expansion of new child care programs to meet community needs.

Explanation

Starting with school-age care in every elementary school to meet demand. BC needs equitable expansion of new spaces through a capital budget using modular facilities where appropriate and ensuring all new publicly funded programs align with community-informed plans, and open as \$10aDay sites.

We remain confident that a quality, affordable, universal child care system is achievable. Polling confirms this is what British Columbians still want and expect their government to deliver. The decisions made in the coming months for Budget 2027 will determine whether the province can get back on track to deliver on this pivotal commitment.