

Imagine a child-care system that works for B.C. families [CA-BC]

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Source: Georgia Straight

Format: Article

Publication Date: 24 Feb 2009

AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

Just for a moment, close your eyes and imagine your community. Think about the public spaces and places that you and others use: the library, the school, the crosswalk, and the community centre.

No doubt there are things about these spaces and places you would change. But, as imperfect as they may be, they do exist, and when they are inadequate or threatened we expect action.

Why is that? Well, for starters, we agreed that everyone would be better off if we pooled our resources to provide these services. It wasn't always easy, but, over time, we built consensus about the value of these services, we allocated a share of our public resources to build and operate them, and we set up an accountable system to deliver them.

So, what's missing from this picture? In spite of extensive research about the positive impact of quality child care on human development; in spite of many studies proving the economic benefits of investing in quality child care and in spite of unprecedented numbers of mothers of young children who want and need to work—B.C. communities are still waiting for a quality child-care system.

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It doesn't have to be this way. Our international trading partners recognize that investment in quality child-care is good for children, families, and their economies. But Canada's child-care policies and funding put us in last place. As shocking as it is, Canada spends a smaller proportion of our GDP on early learning and care than 14 developed countries.

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Even years of economic growth and big surpluses didn't solve B.C.'s child-care crisis. Now that the economy is in trouble, some say we just have to wait. We couldn't disagree more. Public investment in quality child care is one of the best infrastructure investments we could make. Like other infrastructure projects, investment in child care creates jobs.

This time, many of these jobs will go to women. Public spending to reduce the cost of child care will also help families meet other pressing needs. And, during difficult times, child care makes it possible for parents to work, train, or retrain. But, compared to other infrastructure investments, child care has additional benefits. Most importantly, it supports children to be healthy, happy, and participating members of our communities.

In dollars and cents, this translates into reduced long-term demands on education, health, policing, and courts. In human terms, it translates into even better communities than we imagine today.

So, close your eyes again, but this time imagine child care as an expected and accepted part of your community. Imagine that child care has stable funding to lower parent fees, raise caregiver wages, and create more quality spaces. And, imagine the smiles on our faces when we can walk by community child-care centres and hear our children playing.

That is why, now more than ever, the time is right to build the child-care system children, families, communities, and employers need.

- reprinted from the Georgia Straight

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/09/02/imagine-child-care-system-works-bc-families-ca-bc> [2] <http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/advocacy> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8166>