

## CHILD CARE

In 2018, the BC government made a landmark investment to begin addressing the affordability crisis in child care. Our report shows just how urgently needed those measures are in BC, with Metro Vancouver having ranked among Canada's most expensive places for child care last year (alongside Toronto and its suburbs).

The BC government has laid the foundation for a new universal, affordable, quality child care system with a major investment of \$1 billion over three years

Over the last three decades, the need for child care has grown steadily, with the rise in employment rates among women and the corresponding increase in dual-income earner families. This has accompanied changes in the composition of Canadian families, notably increases in lone-parent and step-families, impacting both the need and type of child care required.

Beyond need, the demand for quality child care has also increased, due to the potential benefits on peer socialization, school readiness, and numeracy and language skills. In Canada, options for child care are varied, ranging from nannies, home daycares, daycare centres, preschool programs, and before and after school services. Finding the most appropriate child care arrangement can, at times, be challenging. Parents must often balance the need between the overall quality, convenience, availability and cost of child care.<sup>1</sup>

Surrey released their Surrey Child Care Report in April 2018 detailing a comprehensive analysis of Surrey's ability to provide childcare access for workers, and a lack of coordinated child care planning and service delivery. The key findings of the report illustrated the lack of child care resources and support services for families in the advent of Surrey's booming population. Early Childhood Educators (ECE) cannot receive training in adult education facilities in Surrey.<sup>2</sup>

The research done by Dr. Paul Kershaw of UBC found that work-life conflicts of parents raising young children is actually costly for employers with resulting higher absenteeism rates, greater turnover, and increased use of employer funded extended health benefits.<sup>1</sup> Further, the cost to the BC business community, according to Kershaw, is over \$600 million annually and over \$4 billion for Canadian businesses. These costs are exasperated by the costs to the Canadian health care system of over \$2.5 billion and child welfare of over \$1.2 billion. Inadequate childcare is too costly to ignore.

In Surrey, there is a widespread shortage of qualified, well-trained ECE workers. Because of this shortage, operators are less stringent in hiring and vetting practices.<sup>3</sup> The Fraser Health Authority has reported a high number of licensing exemptions.

### ***ECEs in BC***

- Comparing 2017 to 2014, the number of Early Childhood Educators remained unchanged<sup>4</sup>
- The budget for ECEs also remained unchanged when observing the 2014 provincial budget to the 2017 budget

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2014005-eng.htm>

<sup>2</sup> [Recognized Early Childhood Education Training Institutions](#)

<sup>3</sup> 2018. Surrey Child Care Report.

<sup>4</sup> 2017. Early Childhood Education Report.

In urban regions, prime employment areas for a diverse and skilled workforce, home-ownership requires two reasonable incomes to cover mortgage payments. Childcare for one or more children can be the equivalent of another mortgage payment or higher than rent for family sized homes (2 to 3 bedroom units). To alleviate the pressure on families finding homes adequate to their needs, it is necessary to reduce the cost of childcare so that it is a small flat rate, such as \$10 per day. This would free up financing opportunities for young adults to enter the housing market, becoming stabilized, and contributing to a community's economy. Affordability and accessibility to quality childcare spaces are necessary for employees to be able to perform at peak productivity, confident in the knowledge that their children are cared for in a safe, learning environment. Building a universal, affordable, quality child care system in BC is a smart use of public resources that will have ripple effects across the provincial economy by:

- Removing some pressure from young working families by freeing resources to pay off student loan, mortgage debt or rent.
- Providing a good start for all BC children.
- Allowing more parents (particularly mothers) to participate in the workforce, increasing tax revenues almost immediately.
- Creating new jobs.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. Provide more funding to adequately train Early Childhood Educators that have been exempted to date;
2. Improve access to child care by introducing a new capital budget to purchase and build publicly-owned child care facilities;
3. Enhance child care quality and address the recruitment and retention crisis in the child care sector; and,
4. Reduce child care fees for families.

**Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade.**

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.policynote.ca/bc-budget-2019-maintain-momentum-building-a-universal-affordable-quality-child-care-system/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=focused&utm\\_content=secondary](https://www.policynote.ca/bc-budget-2019-maintain-momentum-building-a-universal-affordable-quality-child-care-system/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=focused&utm_content=secondary)