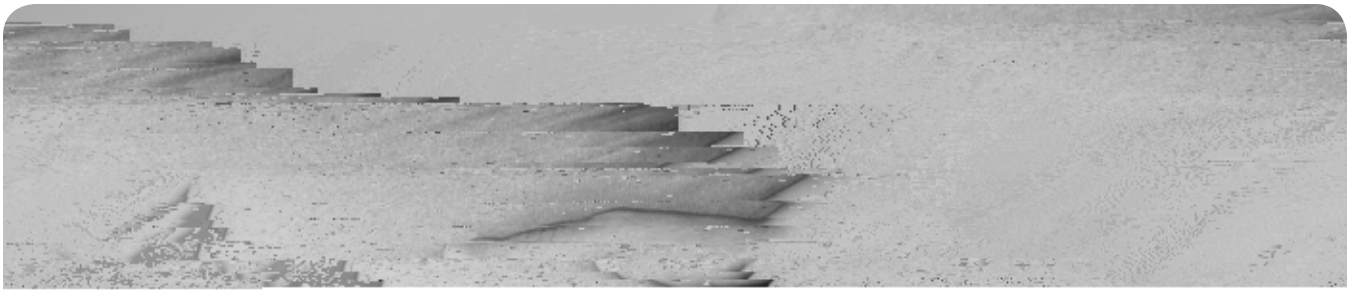


THE FAMILIEE



THE FAMILIES AGENDA

Building on a Foundation of Early Years Services

In 2012, there were an estimated 592,649 children aged 0 – 12 in British Columbia and 274,424 of these children were under the age of 6. An increase in the number of BC children is projected for the coming years. By 2020/21 the population of children aged 0 - 12 will rise to approximately 671,154 and the under 6 population to 311,765. Our government helps to support these children with a wide range of programs that are tailored to their needs and the needs of their parents. These programs and services have been developed to help ensure British Columbia's children thrive and are given every possible opportunity to pursue fulfilling lives. Our government invests more than \$1 billion annually on early learning and childhood development initiatives through a range of

What We Are Changing

Our government will take a flexible and responsive approach to the changing needs of families guided by three goals:

- » Access – Helping ensure early years programs and services including child care are available for children who need them.
- » Quality – Ensuring programs and services are high quality and evidence based.
- » Affordability – Enabling parent choice through strategic and sustainable financial supports.

As we have engaged with British Columbians on our Families A, and are informed by current research into effective early years interventions, several initiatives have emerged that will advance the government's goals of improving access, quality and affordability.

Like governments around the world, we are restricted by the fiscal reality that surrounds us. We cannot spend beyond our means, nor can we saddle future generations with the debt of our spending. Our programs must be sustainable, so that we can be sure that our children and their children will equally have the ability to provide social supports. Our goal is take a number of meaningful, evidence-based steps to better help families with child care and support early childhood development. We are committed to continual improvement in our pursuit of excellence for children's programs and services, building from a solid foundation of programs administered through the Ministries of Health, Education, and Children and Family Development in collaboration with the community services sector across the province.

A OneGovernment Approach

To ensure we remain focused on evidence-based options and outcomes, and to ensure the many activities carried out by a number of ministries across government are well-coordinated and targeted, we are establishing a Provincial Office for the Early Years. The office will be established in June 2013 and begin its work by mapping and reviewing the current range of early years services, then developing an action plan to put in place an integrated system of early childhood services across the province that provides practical and quality information and support services to better meet the needs of busy parents through convenient opening times and services. The action plan will build on the existing community networks, re-profile and better link expenditures where required to better meet the needs of children and families and be informed through ongoing public engagement and focus groups. A fall forum is planned to obtain stakeholder feedback and suggestions. Implementation of the action plan will begin early next year.



Child care support is an important focus:

This office solidifies our “one-government” approach to coordinate cross-ministry service system development in partnerships with communities and citizens across the province. We will lead the implementation of a provincially-branded network of early years development centres that will provide up-to-date information and core services to parents, including advice, assessment and referral services that will then be linked to a system of early childhood development and child care services across the community and ministries. Working closely with community networks and municipalities, the office will facilitate improved integration, coordination, and a range of accessible quality programs and services while maintaining and, where necessary, developing a stronger focus on reaching out to higher-risk children and their families. The Ministry of Children and Family Development will link in a range of its family support services, children and youth mental health services and services to parents of children with special needs to create one-stop convenient access to a range of practical advice, supports and services. The centres will become up-to-date information sources for parents, provide opportunities for complementary services to co-locate and support and build community early years planning efforts. Over \$4.5 million will be added to existing expenditures to implement the early years development centres over the coming three years, increasing to an annual net new expenditure of nearly \$6 million a year by year five.

Access

Our government strives for the right balance between regulation and access. We work hard to ensure that safety standards are maintained. Through our Families First agenda we've also committed to make life as convenient as possible for families across the Province.

To supplement the number of spaces available and to improve convenience, the Ministry of Education is proceeding with legislative changes that will facilitate better use of school facilities for before and after school care and support a seamless day of school and child care.

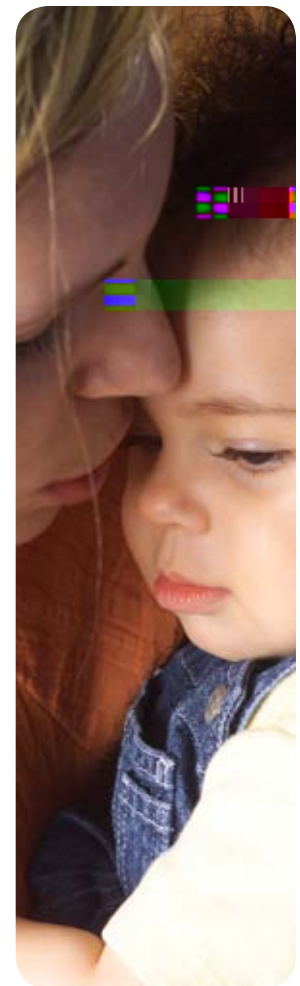
A careful review of our regulatory requirements will be undertaken to determine whether more can be done to increase spaces while maintaining safety and standards.

In addition, \$32 million of funding will be provided over three years to support the creation of up to 2,000 new licensed child care spaces, with the goal of opening 13,000 new spaces over the next eight years. Emphasis will be placed on creating spaces in areas currently underserved by child care and on school grounds. This will add to the more than 100,000 spaces currently funded by government.

Quality

Given the importance of early years experiences, it is essential to focus on continually improving the quality of the early years services, including child care.

Building from the consultation with families and service providers and the re-profiling and linking of the existing service structure into a more seamless,



- » The Ministry of Education's two-year implementation of full-day kindergarten was completed in September 2011, extending the benefits of the \$327 million program to approximately 38,000 kindergarten students across British Columbia (currently). To support this expansion, government increased annual funding by \$129 million and invested an additional \$144 million in capital

Note: *Source of population numbers is P.E.O.P.L.E. Projection 36, BC Stats, Service BC, BC Ministry of Labour, Citizens' Services and Open Government*

accessible and convenient system, additional strategies will be incrementally

