

Current State Analysis for Vancouver's Childcare Strategy (2022)

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Current State Analysis for Vancouver's Childcare Strategy (2022)

1 Executive Summary

Since the 1970s, the City of Vancouver has taken an approach to childcare that integrates planning and policy across different areas of focus (including social policy, grants and funding, financing growth, land-use and real estate) to address local needs for children and families, and to support the city's economic vitality. In 2011, Council first signed on to the community-led \$10-a-Day Plan, advocating for a public, universal childcare system. In 2014, Council approved the *Healthy City Strategy*, outlining as one of its 12 goals the provision of *A Good Start* to support children's long-term healthy development, for which increased access to quality childcare is a key indicator of progress.

While childcare is primarily the responsibility of provinces and territories, a decades-long shortage of senior government policy, coordination and financial support have left a large gap between childcare need and supply at the local level. In addition to this gap, the city has seen uneven distribution of childcare services across the city, resulting in limited and inequitable access for Vancouver's children. The lack of affordable, available and suitable childcare options has resulted in hard economic challenges and choices for families with children, including those who seek to enter, re-enter, or remain in the workforce, or to pursue education and training. This experience, common to many families, has a disproportionate affect on women, who continue to provide the majority of unpaid childcare in BC and across Canada, particularly women who are lone parents or from equity-denied groups. A chronically underfunded system has also resulted in childcare educators being offered typically low wages and variable working conditions; a childcare staffing shortage that began in the years before the pandemic has since led to a national childcare staffing crisis.

In 2018, federal and provincial governments began to make new policy and funding commitments towards an expanded, more affordable and accessible childcare system in Canada. These commitments included the development of an *Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework*, and a federal *Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework*. The Province of British Columbia also released *ChildCare BC: Caring for Kids, Lifting Up Families*, a childcare plan that set new and ambitious goals to expand support for childcare affordability, and increase provincial investment in developing new childcare facilities. A year later, the Province and the City of Vancouver entered into a memorandum of understanding that set out an expanded, joint target for new childcare spaces in Vancouver, along with a provincial funding commitment of \$33M to support childcare development in this city.

In 2021, the historic *Canada-British Columbia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement – 2021-2026* identified steps that senior governments would take towards building a universal, \$10-a-day childcare system, including prioritizing licensed childcare in civic and non-profit settings. In 2022, the mandate for early learning and childcare in BC was placed under the newly renamed and restructured Ministry of Education and Child Care

(previously held within the Ministry of Children and Family Services, which focuses on protective services and support for children, youth and families).

While the City of Vancouver has facilitated the development of 39% of full-day licensed group childcare spaces in the city serving children younger than school age, it does not directly operate childcare programs. There are three broad types of childcare service provider (also known as the “auspice” of childcare); they are, in order of prevalence in Vancouver for full-day childcare serving children younger than school age: (1) non-profit organizations (61%), (2) for-profit organizations (23% commercial operators, 16% home-based family operators), and (3) public and government agencies, including Indigenous First Nations and school boards (<1%). Research has found sector-wide correlations between auspice and ownership, affordability, stability and quality. On the whole:

- Commercial for-profit centres are found to charge higher fees than non-profit centres or home-based family childcare;
- For-profit childcares are found to be less stable than their non-profit counterparts, with closures more likely for commercial centres, and much more likely for home-based family childcare which was found to have the lowest stability of all childcare categories;
- Non-profit and public auspice is consistently linked to higher program quality, including compliance with health and safety measures, inclusion of children with additional support needs, more training and qualifications for staff/educators, and more developmentally stimulating programming.

The Province of BC has signalled new priorities that will direct their childcare investments, particularly towards development of childcare spaces under the auspice and ownership of “Indigenous Government, non-profit and/or public, and family-based child care”. The City of Vancouver’s efforts have been consistently aligned with these provincial priorities.

Communicating and partnering with senior governments to address childcare challenges and gaps experienced in Vancouver remains essential. These include challenging gaps in childcare affordability, due to a high cost of living in Vancouver which affects not only childcare but also other essential needs such as housing and food; gaps in inclusive childcare that welcomes children of all physical and developmental abilities and across cultures; a lack of services that extend beyond the hours of a standard workweek; a plan to address the needs for culturally safe, Indigenous-led and Indigenous-centred childcare for urban Indigenous families in Vancouver; and geographical distribution that is uneven and partly divorced from assessed needs.

The information compiled in this document forms the background, gathers reference material, and informs policy directions for Vancouver’s Childcare Strategy outlined in the document Making Strides: Vancouver’s Childcare Strategy (2022). We hope it may be a useful reference to other partners as well.

Given the pace of change, City staff hope to update the data and analyses in this report as new data becomes available, including cross-tabulated 2020 Census data and intersectional data committed by senior governments. City staff also intend to make this kind of information more available to support the work of partners in achieving shared goals and supporting senior government directions to deliver a universal childcare system.

2 An Integrated Approach to Childcare

Childcare emerged as a City of Vancouver priority in the 1970's. Since then, planning for childcare has been integrated across City areas of work, including social policy, grants and funding, land-use planning, financing growth and real estate. The City has also worked alongside senior government and the non-profit childcare sector to address childcare needs for Vancouver's families. The City's public policy goals and efforts have consistently reflected research-based evidence demonstrating that access to quality childcare provides a good start for children, economic well-being for families, and support broad economic vitality and gender equity.

2.1 A Good Start for Children

The [City of Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy \(2014\)](#) includes twelve goals, the first of which is "A Good Start", which aims to increase school readiness and reduce child poverty by improving access to quality early learning and childcare, among other goals.

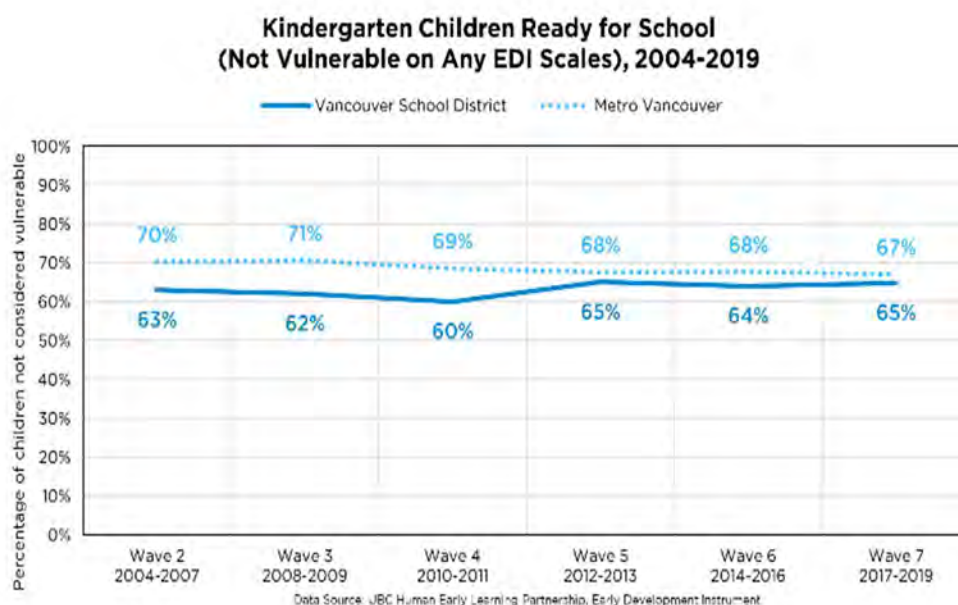


Figure 1. Vancouver Early Development Instrument (EDI) Scales – UBC Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP)

The UBC Human Early Learning Partnership's (HELP) [Early Development Instrument \(EDI\)](#) research has shown that 35% of Vancouver's preschool-age children are developmentally not ready for school when they start kindergarten.¹ The City considers availability of licensed childcare to be a benchmark for "quality learning and care", since licensed programs are regulated and monitored against health and safety standards and for child development outcomes.

¹ "Early Development Instruments." UBC Human Early Learning Partnership. Webpage. <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/edi/>

Widespread access to quality early learning and childcare (ELCC) helps give Vancouver's children a good start to reach their full potential, improving physical and mental social emotional health, school readiness and long-term outcomes.

From an equity perspective, evidence shows that universal access to quality, inclusive, play-based early learning and childcare can help to reduce long-term inequities experienced by children in more vulnerable circumstances by preventing the formation of significant and potentially lasting "achievement gaps" between equity-denied children and their counterparts. Evidence shows that quality ELCC builds long-term resilience in children, particularly among those who face additional challenges² related to poverty, as well as those experiencing cognitive delays and behavioural problems.³ However, children facing additional challenges are historically underrepresented in any kind Canadian ELCC program⁴, but overrepresented in low-quality ELCC programs³. Coordinated public policy that seeks to build a system of universally accessible, quality ELCC programs can significantly increase equitable outcomes for all of Vancouver's children and families. Longitudinal studies have shown that positive benefits of quality childcare can extend through children's lifetimes, with improved health outcomes, as well as "educational success [...] followed by increased success in employment, social integration and sometimes reduced criminality".⁵

For school-age children, licensed before- and after-school childcare programming offers a supportive environment to play, socialize, and develop new friendships and skills.⁶ The Middle years Development Instrument (MDI)⁷, identifies strong correlations between school-age children's participation in after-school activities and their overall health and well-being, social emotional development, and academic achievement. Quality school age care programs may also significantly improve food security⁸ and increase healthy physical activity.⁹

Children who attend quality childcare programs are provided with an important opportunity to develop critical skills in socialization, language, gross motor, and emotional regulation, at a

² Japel, Christa, and Japel Welp. (2008). "Factors of risk, vulnerability and school readiness among preschoolers: Evidence from Quebec." *IRPP Choices*.p.14. Google Scholar.
<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2009/04/Lessons%20To%20Be%20Learned%20From%20Quebec.pdf>

³Ibid.

⁴ Archambault, Judith *et al.* (2020). "Early Childhood Education and Care Access for Children from Disadvantaged Backgrounds: Using a Framework to Guide Intervention. *Early Childhood Education Journal*. Vol 48. p. 345-352.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10643-019-01002-x>

⁵ Melhuish, Edward *et al.* (2015). "A review of research on the effects of early childhood education and care (ECEC) on child development." CARE-European Early Childhood Education and Care. p3 https://ecec-care.org/fileadmin/careproject/Publications/reports/CARE_WP4_D4_1_review_of_effects_of_ecec.pdf

⁶ Oliver, Carolyn. (2020). "Meeting the Childcare Needs of the Hudson Community: Report Prepared for Hudson Out of School Care Society"

⁷ The MDI is a self-reported tool established by the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at the University of British Columbia to measure development in five areas linked to health, well-being and academic achievement for children in Grades 4 through 8. "Early Development Instruments." UBC Human Early Learning Partnership. Webpage.
<http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/edi/>

⁸ Haddad, M., H. Lambie-Mumford, and L. Sims. (2018). "Extended Schools." Child Poverty Action Group: London, UK. https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/policypost/ExtendedSchools_April2018.pdf

⁹ Horgan, D., *et al.* (2018). "Children's views on school-age care: Child's play or childcare? Children and Youth Services Review." *Children and Youth Services Review*, Elsevier, vol. 91(C), pages 338-346

young age¹⁰. Their participation in quality, play-based childcare can also help to prepare them for greater success in youth and adult life.^{11,12}

2.2 Economic Well-Being for Families and Childcare Educators

For parents of young children, the ability to participate in the paid labour force or pursue higher education depends on their ability to secure childcare. The absence of suitable, available childcare tends to disproportionately affect women with young children, leading to lower rates of labour force participation, greater financial insecurity, increased dependence on co-parents¹³, and a less positive career outlook. Canadian mothers currently earn 15% less than fathers, and 10% less than women without children.¹⁴ Research on what is being coined the “motherhood penalty” shows that gaps in paid employment compound over a mother’s lifetime, with the greatest effects felt by women who are lone parents and/or women from equity-denied populations.¹⁵ In urban areas with higher costs of living such as Vancouver, the economic impacts of not being able to secure affordable childcare may also lead to displacement of families outside the city.

The question of economic well-being of childcare staff has been raised in recent years as well. Staff are at the heart of quality early learning and childcare programs, with studies noting that key variables of childcare program quality include “wages, working conditions, Early Childhood Educator (ECE) certification, staff turnover and morale, compliance with regulations, staff harshness/sensitivity [and] staff/child ratios”.¹⁶ To date, low wages and other workforce inequities remain prevalent among ECE workers, particularly in cities such as Vancouver where gaps between ECE wages and overall cost of living are wide. This profession is highly gendered, and employs a large proportion of newcomers who face additional systemic challenges to making ends meet. For many ECEs, these challenges result in significant instability in the workforce. The childcare workforce, which had begun to experience key shortages of qualified staff in the years leading up to the pandemic, are now facing a national staffing crisis as ECEs continue to exit the workforce.¹⁷

¹⁰ Frede, E., Jung, K., Barnett, S., Lamy, E., and Figueras, A. (2007). The Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study (APPLES). Interim Report. National Institute for Early Education Research, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers: The State University. <http://nieer.org/resources/research/APPLES.pdf>

¹¹ “Investing in high quality early childhood education and care.” OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/48980282.pdf>

¹² Farran, Dale *et al.* (2022). “Effects of a statewide pre-kindergarten program on children’s achievement and behavior through sixth grade”. *Developmental Psychology*, 58(3).

¹³ Mlne, Kendra. (2016). “The impacts of childcare on the human rights of women and children.” Westcoast Leaf. Vancouver, B.C. <http://www.westcoastleaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/High-Stakes-low-res-for-web.pdf>

¹⁴ Moyser, Melissa. (2017). “Women and Paid Work.” Statistics Canada. Online. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14694-eng.htm>

¹⁵ The Canadian Womens’ Foundation *et al.* (2020). “Resetting Normal: Women, Decent Work and Canada’s Fractured Care Economy.” The Canadian Women’s Foundation. p12. <https://fw3s926r0q42i6kes3bxg4i1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ResettingNormal-Women-Decent-Work-and-Care-EN.pdf>

¹⁶ Friendly, Martha *et al.* (2021). “Risky Business: childcare ownership in Canada, past, present and future.” Childcare Resource and Research Unit. University of Toronto. p.10 <https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/Risky-business-child-care-ownership-in-Canada-past-present-future.pdf>

¹⁷ McGinn, Dave. (2022) “Daycare workers are exiting the profession in droves, just as access for parents opens up”. *Globe and Mail*, 2022 March 12. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-daycare-early-childhood-education-workers-leaving-jobs-access/>

2.3 Economic Vitality and Gender Equity

Access to affordable childcare correlates broadly with women's increased labour force participation and a reduced gender employment gap.¹⁸ Along with supporting mothers to enter, remain in, or re-enter the workforce, the childcare sector itself directly employs approximately 17,000 people in the Metro Vancouver region (as Early Childhood Educators and Assistants in facility-based licensed group care as well as in-home family childcare providers, sustaining exponentially more jobs in the local economy, as "the workforce behind the workforce."¹⁹ In 1998, Quebec implemented a universal childcare program, which has demonstrated net financial benefits through increased income and consumption taxes.²⁰ In a 12 year period (1996-2008), universal childcare contributed to an estimated 1.7% increase in GDP in Quebec.²¹

Economic analyses consistently show that universal childcare is a worthwhile public investment. A 2020 report by the Centre for Future Work projects that a universal Canada-wide ELCC program would add more than \$100 billion to the Canadian economy, and would generate more than enough government revenues to cover program costs.²² The Conference Board of Canada argues that for every dollar spent on ELCC programs, up to \$6 in economic benefits are produced. These benefits derive from mothers' increased earnings, as well as long-term benefits when children reach adulthood including "higher employment earnings, higher tax brackets, lower social welfare use, and possibly reduced incarceration costs".²³

Implementing ELCC programs that are high quality and universally accessible at a national level is both a moral and economic imperative that has been shown to have the potential to benefit generations of children and families. Amidst growing evidence supporting the economic benefits of universally accessible childcare, in 2021, the Government of Canada stepped forward with an unprecedented level of investment to support the implementation of a universal system of childcare in Canada. Soon after, the Canada-British Columbia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (2021-2026) was signed.

2.4 Commitments to a Rights-Based Approach to Childcare

In 1989, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child established that governments should ensure families have the right to benefit from childcare services and addressed children as rights bearers. Soon after, the City responded with the Vancouver Children's Policy (1992), which recognizes the rights of Vancouver's children, including "access to high quality, community-based services that are culturally appropriate, child-centred, affordable and non-

¹⁸ Lefebvre, Pierre and Phillippe Merrigan. (2008). "Child-Care Policy and the Labor Supply of Mothers with Young Children: A Natural Experiment from Canada." *Journal of Labor Economics*, vol. 26, no. 3. University of Chicago. Online. Google Scholar. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.590.1870&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

¹⁹ Statistics Canada. "2016 Census Profile: NOC Cross Tab." Community Data Program. Online.

²⁰ Fortin, Pierre. (2012). "Impacts of Quebec's Universal Low-fee Childcare Program on Female Labour Force Participation, Domestic Income and Government Budgets. University of Toronto. Toronto, ON. https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/News/Fortin-Godbout-St_Cerny_eng.pdf

²¹ Monsebraaten, Laurie. (2011). "Quebec's child-care scheme pays for itself, says economist." *Toronto Star*. Toronto, ON. https://www.thestar.com/life/parent/2011/06/22/quebecs_childcare_scheme_pays_for_itself_economist.html

²² Standford, Jim. (2020). "Child care expansion would boost economic recovery, study finds." Centre for Future Work. Website. <https://centreforfuturework.ca/2020/11/25/child-care-expansion-would-boost-economic-recovery-study-finds/>

²³ Craig, Alexander, *et al.* (2017). "Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care." The Conference Board of Canada. Ottawa. <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=9231>

stigmatizing". Thirty years later, some progress has been made but large gaps between the supply of full time spaces and the need remain.

Advocates have long identified childcare as a human rights issue for both women and children. The City of Vancouver has worked to advance goals of reconciliation, inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility under City policies, including the Reconciliation Framework (2014), Equity Framework (2021), the Accessibility Strategy (2022), as well as the creation of a United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) Task Force in 2021. Moving forward, the City's approach to childcare will be aligned with the commitments laid out in these broader municipal frameworks and with senior government goals, while also responding to recommendations from the community.

The non-profit sector in Vancouver has been extremely active in providing leadership and advocacy related to the rights of women and children in Vancouver. A recently published report by the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, "*Red Women Rising: Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside*" (2019), includes the following important recommendations related to the critical need for childcare services to support women and children in the inner city.²⁴

- **Immediate Services Needed in the Downtown Eastside** – A multipurpose Indigenous Women's Centre that is run by and for Indigenous women with long-term funding and wrap around support services [...] including childcare;
- **Guaranteed Public Service** – A free and culturally appropriate childcare system for all Indigenous families;
- **End Indigenous Women's Displacement from Land** - Governments must ensure that Indigenous women are engaged fully and have equitable access to decision-making on issues of [...] child care and other areas impacting Indigenous women's lives;
- **Build Social Housing and Transition Homes** - Any new social housing must consider the needs of Indigenous women, such as adequate space for children and extended families [...] and with integrated services such as child care; and
- **Improve Indigenous Women's Wellness** - Strengthen all the social determinants of Indigenous women's health by ensuring access to and governance over [...] child care (and other components such as health, land, etc.).

The City and its partners are working in collaboration to respond to these recommendations, to improve the health, wellness, and future prospects for women, children and families living in the Downtown Eastside. The *Making Strides* childcare strategy for Vancouver lays the groundwork for collaboration between City departments to identify new ways of working together towards shared goals (for example, expanding opportunities to co-locate childcare with Indigenous-led housing developments). Many of these recommendations are reflected in the draft Childcare Strategy (see Appendix G), and will form the basis for further exploration and ongoing joint work

²⁴ Martin, Carol, Muree and Harsha Walia. (2019). *Red Women Rising: Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside*. Downtown Eastside Women's Centre. Online. P155.-185. <https://dewc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MMIW-Report-Final-March-10-WEB.pdf>

ahead. The City and its partners are also working closely with senior governments to advance shared interests and commitments towards reconciliation and equity by, among other goals, providing universally accessible and culturally safe childcare.

2.5 The City of Vancouver’s Role in Childcare to Date

Table 1: City of Vancouver Childcare Commitments and Milestones to Date

YEAR	CITY OF VANCOUVER CHILDCARE COMMITMENTS AND MILESTONES
1970s	<p>The City provided nominal ground leases for modular childcare centres funded by the province and operated by non-profit organizations, and began to deliver secured childcare centres for children younger than school age through rezoning.</p> <p>Part-day/part-week preschool programs became licensed in many Community Centres.</p>
1990	<p>The Civic Childcare Strategy and Action Plan was approved by Council, establishing a process for the City's use of Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) and Development Cost Levies (DCLs) to fund childcare capital projects. This funding innovation was made possible by the Vancouver Charter, and has since facilitated creation of more than 2,000 licensed childcare spaces.</p>
1993	<p>The City’s Childcare Design Guidelines set basic, evidence-based design standards for new licensed group care centres with a goal of supporting healthy child development.</p>
2002	<p>Moving Forward– Childcare: A Cornerstone of Child Development Services updated the City’s policy directions that have guided its role in childcare until the present.</p> <p>A focus on collaboration with public partners to advance objectives of a childcare system led to the Child Care Protocol (2004), the foundational document for the establishment of a Joint Council on Childcare (JCC) by the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Board of Education, and Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. Since 2004, the JCC has advised and enhanced coordination of childcare goals and supports by local public partners.</p> <p>Guided by this policy framework, City Council first established a childcare space expansion target for 2004-2007, to guide investment in childcare creation as part of the municipal capital plan.</p>
2011	<p>City Council endorsed the community-led Community Plan for a Public System of Early Care and Learning (\$10aDay Plan) (endorsed again in 2021).</p>
2014	<p>The Healthy City Strategy policy framework identified the goal of providing children with A Good Start, including access to childcare and school readiness as a key building block for a healthy city for all.</p>
2019	<p>The Province of BC and City of Vancouver entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in 2019, securing \$33 million in provincial investment and setting additional targets for childcare infrastructure expansion in Vancouver.</p>
2022	<p>This strategy, Making Strides: Vancouver’s Childcare Strategy provides an update to the City’s policy directions going forward.</p>

3 Laying the Foundation for a Universal System - Senior Government Childcare Commitments and Investments

For decades, the responsibility for providing childcare services in BC was left to the private sector, or undertaken by local governments, with the expectation that an ample supply of spaces would be developed in response to market-driven demand. Since initial capital costs are high, and operational costs of providing childcare services (particularly for full-time infant and toddler care) are higher than what most families can afford to pay in fees, needs have continued to outstrip supply. In not-for-profit settings, childcare operating costs are primarily driven by staffing costs, which are positively correlated with staff education, experience and quality of care. Efforts by local governments, the non-profit sector, and other partners to mitigate the mismatch between childcare supply and demand have helped to narrow these gaps (or to keep gaps from widening further), but have fallen far short of being able to provide universally accessible childcare options to all families. New senior government commitments promise to transform childcare operational funding, and to provide capital supports needed to create new spaces, though details of these commitments and processes have yet to be announced.

3.1 Senior Government Commitments since 2018

In the last five years, major shifts in senior government policy and investments have begun paving the way towards a more affordable and accessible childcare system as shown in the timeline below.

Table 2: Federal and Provincial Childcare Commitments and Milestones since 2018

YEAR	SENIOR GOVERNMENT CHILDCARE COMMITMENTS
2018	<p>The Government of Canada developed the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework and Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework. These frameworks outline key directions for collaborating with provincial, territorial, First Nations, Metis and Inuit leadership.</p> <p>The Province’s Child Care BC Caring for Kids, Lifting up Families plan sets new ambitious goals, including expanded affordability supports and capital investments for developing new childcare facilities.</p>
2019	<p>The Province and City of Vancouver entered into a Memorandum of Understanding securing \$33 million in provincial funds to support the development of 1,200 new spaces in Vancouver</p> <p>The Province declared childcare as an essential service after recognizing the critical role childcare plays in the economy during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
2020	<p>Legislative amendments to the BC School Act are implemented to enable public school boards to directly operate licensed childcare.</p>
2021	<p>The Government of Canada’s Budget 2021: A Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan made a 5-year commitment of \$30B to begin developing a universal system of childcare nationally.</p>

	The Canada-BC Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement identified clear steps to build a universal \$10 a Day system, including the creation of 30,000 new spaces and \$10/day fees by 2026, and implementation of a wage grid for Early Childhood Educators.
2022	Responsibility for childcare shifted from the Ministry of Children and Family Development to the Ministry of Education and Child Care. This shift will lead to an integration of early learning and childcare into the public education system.

3.2 Senior Government Targets for Childcare Expansion in Vancouver

BC has set a target of creating 30,000 new childcare spaces for children under 6 years by 2028, as outlined in the *Canada-BC Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (2022)*. Based on population, the City of Vancouver’s proportional share of the provincial target is expected to be approximately 4,000 spaces. The *Canada-Wide ELCC Agreement* commits to focusing on space creation “in community investments that are long term” and operated “by not-for-profit, public, Indigenous Government and family-based child care providers”. Capital commitments associated with these senior government targets fall short of the full cost of construction, particularly in high density urban areas.

In partnership with the Province, the City and local public partners will continue to play an integral role in enabling and facilitating the accelerated development of new childcare spaces. Building on more than four decades of municipal investments in secured, quality, non-profit-operated childcare facility development, the childcare landscape in Vancouver is in a good position to support the provincial and federal goals in transitioning to a universal, primarily not-for-profit childcare system. Vancouver’s readiness reflects the vision of successive City Councils recognizing the benefits of prioritizing child care investments to help create a sustainable city that includes children and families. More work lies ahead, however, as the City of Vancouver’s conservative estimates indicate that current supply meets only 43% of the need for licensed childcare for children ages 0-12 years (as of Q1 2022).

4 Children in Vancouver Today - Community Trends

Understanding demographic trends related to children and families in Vancouver and the Metro Vancouver region is essential for land-use planning and childcare-related policy development at the municipal level.

For more than four decades, the City has collected and analyzed demographic data, facilitated regular stakeholder consultations, and developed tools for identifying shortfalls in the supply of childcare spaces by local area, as well as for projecting future needs based on anticipated population changes.

4.1 Methodology and Limitations

To assess population trends and determine future needs for childcare in the City of Vancouver, quantitative statistical analysis was conducted utilizing Census and National Household Survey (NHS) data sources from 2001-2016 primarily and the first two 2020 census releases. This analysis was conducted alongside descriptive statistical analysis of the following datasets:

- Licensed childcare capacity reports from the Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre;
- City-facilitated childcare space data;
- Income and jobs data from the Economic Land and Employment Review;
- Transportation Demand Management data from the City's Engineering department; and
- Integration of the Social Indicator and Trends: City of Vancouver Profile 2020 for select graphs.

Some of the limitations include, but are not restricted to:

- Census data used in the following analyses is 6 years old.²⁵ While 2020 Census data is available at the City-wide level, at the time of writing, data is not yet available by local areas used for analysis.
- Census data does not tell us the whole picture of childcare, or the intersectional and specific needs of varying demographic groupings of residents;
- Over-reliance of quantitative data has been shown to be harmful to varying populations, especially those in vulnerable situations;
- The Indigenous self-identification question is problematic creating non-response bias and leading to possible under-reporting of Indigenous population data;
- Pre-2021 census data only asks about binary sex and leaves out gender;
- Census 2021 releases to date have only been for dwelling type, population count by age and sex for most census geographies but not local areas;
- Impacts of families living outside Vancouver accessing care in Vancouver (and vice versa); and
- Impacts on shortfalls of care based on affordability, availability of flexible hours, and other considerations not captured in current tools.

²⁵ The 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) has greater non-response bias than other years due to its voluntary nature, and inconsistencies when compared to Census data.

4.2 Vancouver Child Population Trends: 2001-2016

Census data show that there has been a net loss of children living in Vancouver since 2001. Declining housing affordability over the past 20 years, particularly in the City of Vancouver, is considered a primary driver of this trend.²⁶ A growth in employment opportunities in other municipalities in the Metro Vancouver region over the same period of time has also helped to facilitate out-migration of families from the City. Nevertheless, the majority of all jobs in Metro Vancouver are still located in Vancouver.²⁷

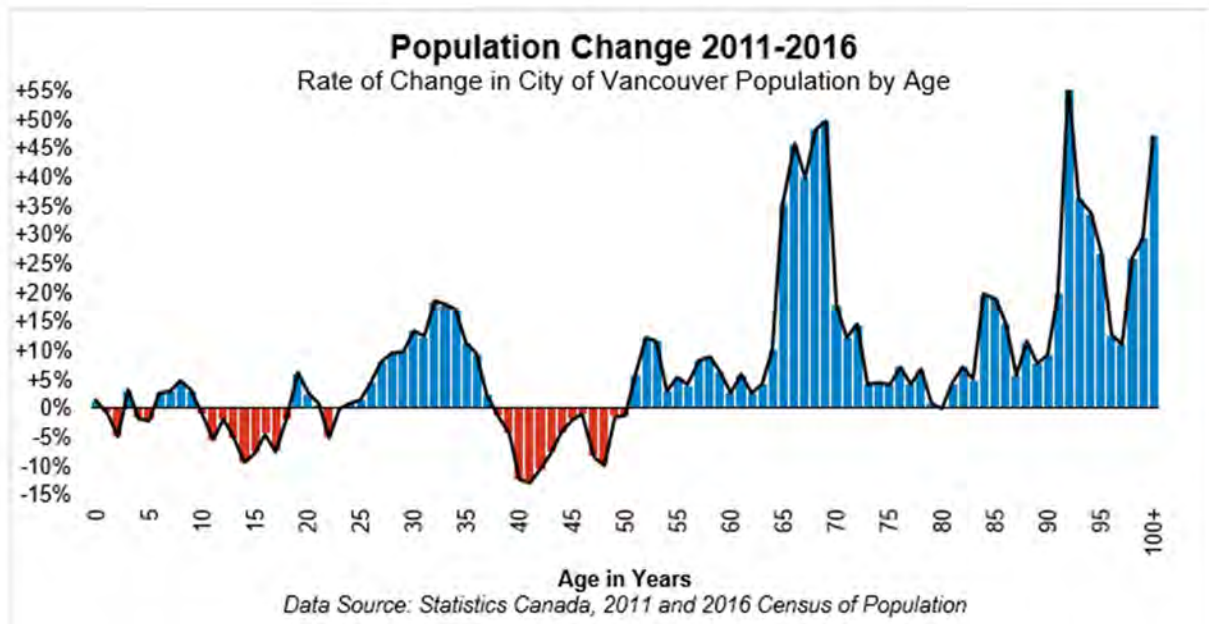


Figure 2. City of Vancouver Ages 5-12 Rate of Change by %. Source: Statistics Canada - Census 2001-2016

²⁶ Social Policy and Projects department, 2020. "Vancouver Social Indicators Profile 2020". City of Vancouver.

<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/social-indicators-profile-city-of-vancouver.pdf>

²⁷ Employment Lands and Economic Review, Planning department, City of Vancouver. (2021) "Factsheet 1.2: Economic Structure of Vancouver." City of Vancouver. <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/1-2-economic-structure-vancouvers-role-in-the-region.pdf>

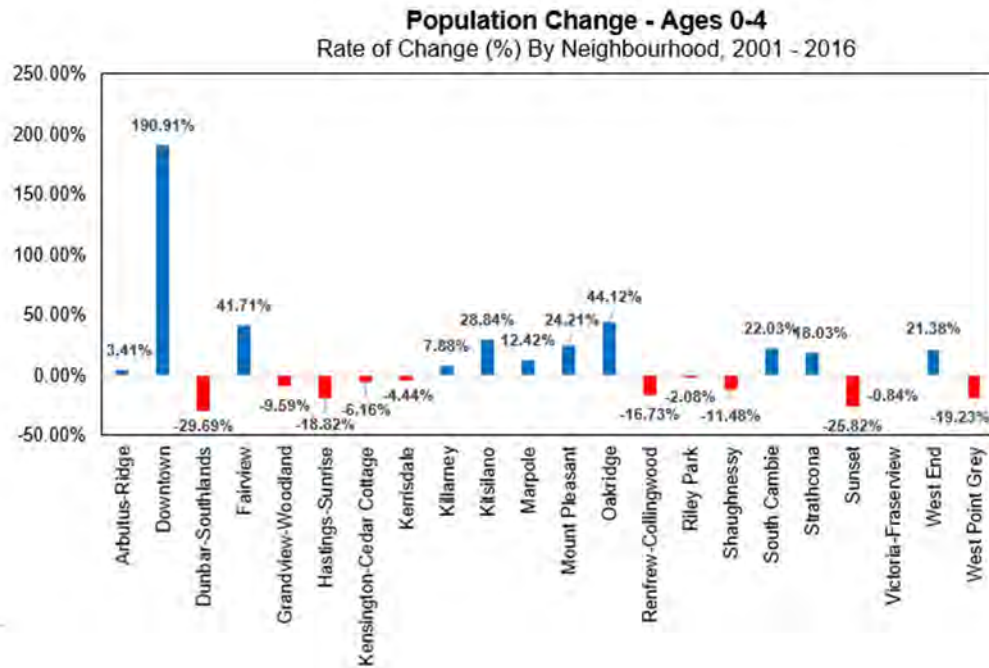


Figure 3. City of Vancouver Ages 0-4 Rate of Change by Percentage. Source: Statistics Canada - Census 2001-2016

The distribution of families with children ages 0-12 years at the neighbourhood level has also changed significantly since 2001. Generally, increasing numbers of families now reside in neighbourhoods where densification and planning for family-oriented housing has been occurring, particularly in the Downtown core (see Fig. 2 and 3).

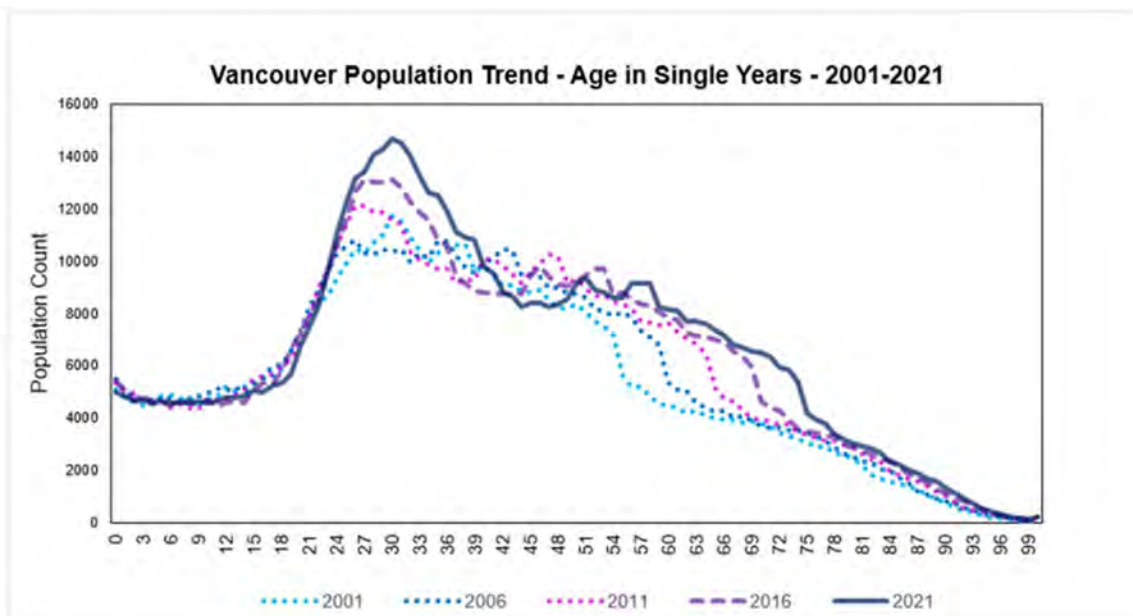


Figure 4. City of Vancouver Population Trend Age in Single Years - Source: Statistics Canada - Census 2001-2021

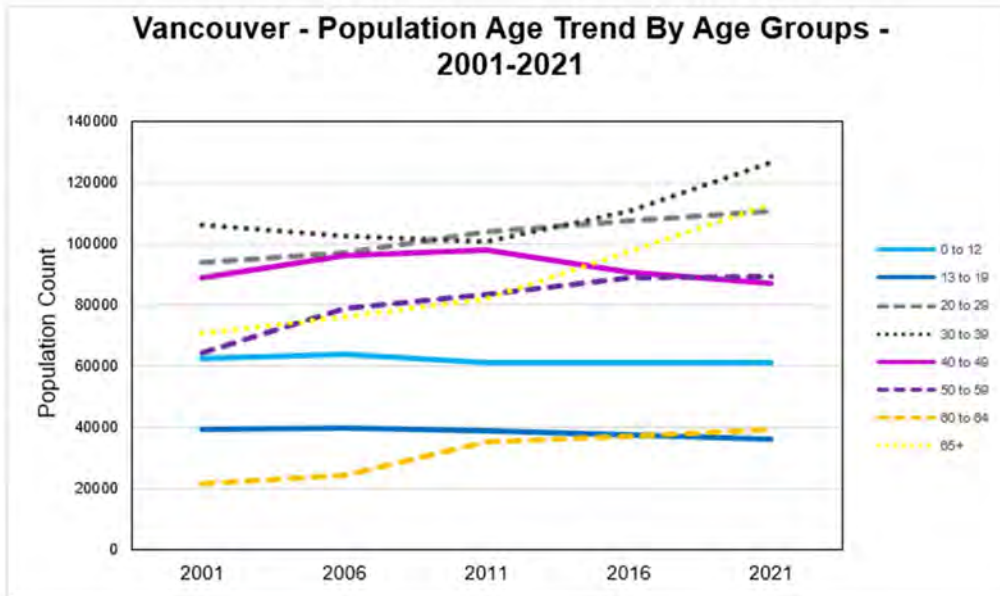


Figure 5. City of Vancouver Population Ages 0-12 Trend - Source: Statistics Canada - Census 2001-2021

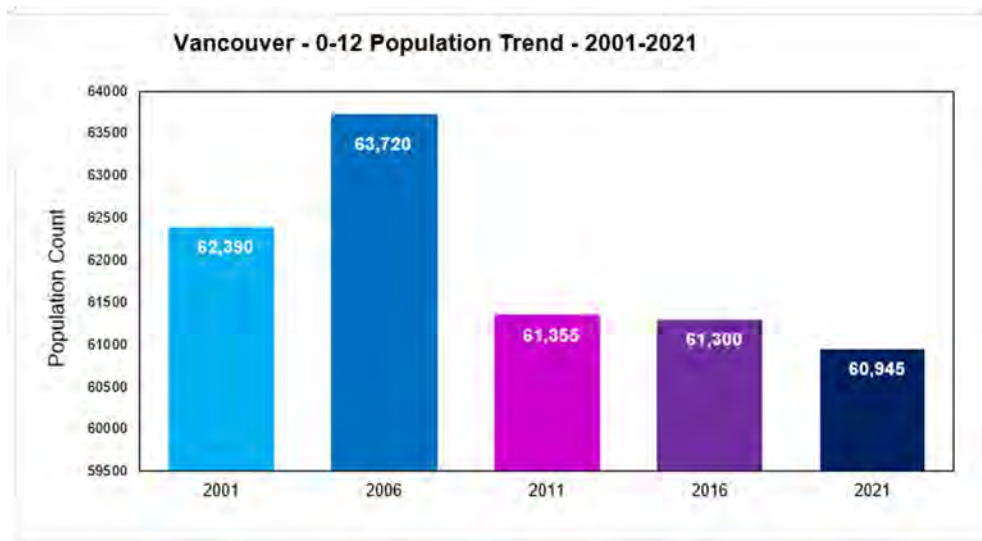


Figure 6. City of Vancouver Population Trend by Age Groups - Source: Statistics Canada 2001-2021

4.3 Indigenous Population Trends in Vancouver: 2001-2016

Census data show that the number of residents in Vancouver self-reporting as Indigenous increased between 2001 and 2016. In 2016, there were 13,900 Indigenous residents in Vancouver representing 2.4% of the total population, with the highest numbers in the 0 to 14 and 25 to 34 year age groups. Of this count, 1,655 Indigenous-identified residents lived on the Musqueam reserve. The Vancouver neighbourhoods with the highest concentrations of urban Indigenous residents are Grandview-Woodland, Downtown, Hastings-Sunrise, Kensington-Cedar Cottage and the West End.

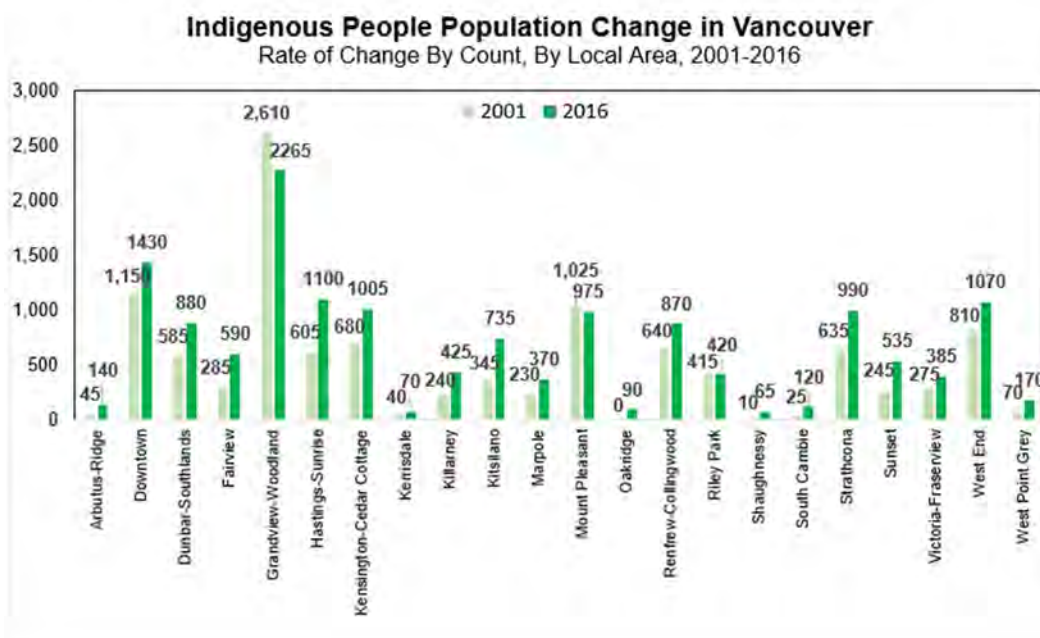


Figure 7. City of Vancouver Indigenous Population Change - Source: Statistics Canada - Census 2011 and 2016

The 2016 Census data counted the reported population for children ages 0-12 in Vancouver that self-identified as Indigenous as just under 2,000 people, of which nearly 1,000 were reported to be ages 0-5 years.

5 Childcare Supply in Vancouver

This section describes Vancouver’s supply of licensed childcare spaces, regulated by the Province of BC. The majority of data in this section is sourced from the Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre (WCCRC). While most families requiring full-time care outside of the home likely prefer to access licensed child care options which are required to meet Provincially-regulated health and safety standards, many families also turn to unlicensed arrangements due to the scarcity of licensed spaces. Reliable data is not available for unlicensed care, such as informal care by family members, domestic caregivers, or license-not-required in-home care serving two or fewer children. This section also does not reflect early learning programs that don’t require a license to operate, such as family programs offered in neighbourhood houses, libraries, friendship centres, etc.

5.1 Current Supply of Childcare by License Category (Ages 0-12)

The [BC Child Care Licensing Regulation](#) sets out basic health and safety requirements specific to each childcare licensing category, and is regulated by BC regional health authorities. In Vancouver, [Vancouver Coastal Health](#) is responsible for issuing childcare licenses, conducting inspections, and enforcing the BC Child Care Licensing Regulation.

Between 2016- 2021, the total number of licensed childcare spaces serving children 5 years and under in Vancouver (the “supply”) increased by 13%, or roughly 1,000 spaces. These changes in supply have been unevenly distributed among licence categories. Serving children ages 5-12 years during the same period, Vancouver’s supply of licensed school age care spaces increased by 17%, or roughly 800 spaces.

BC CHILDCARE LICENSE CATEGORIES

Full-day Group Childcare (0- 5 years)

Full-day group care programs serving ages 0-5 are currently the fastest growing license types in Vancouver. Programs are licensed either for ages 0 to 3 (“*Group Child Care – under 30 months*”) or for ages 3 to 5 (“*Group Child Care – 30 months to school age*”).

For each childcare space currently licensed in Vancouver for children under 36 months, there are three spaces licensed for children ages 3 to 5. This imbalance generally reflects the operational challenges associated with serving children under age 3, who require more staff and a smaller group size to ensure safe supervision (*i.e.* a higher staff-to-child ratio), resulting in greater staffing costs in an operating budget.

Part-Day-day Group Childcare (0- 5 years)

Part-day and part-time group childcare license types fill a specific early learning and childcare need for some families, but in Vancouver, this is the only licensing category for which supply exceeds estimated demand. Over the past 5 years, this license category has also seen more closures than any other group license type.

Preschool offers part-day early learning and childcare for children ages 3-5 years for two to four hours per day, up to 5 days per week. While nearly 25% of preschool spaces licensed in Vancouver have closed over the past 5 years, significant numbers of programs remain.

Occasional care offers part-time flexible care for children ages 18 months and older, for up to 8 hours per day, and 40 hours per month.

Small-Scale Programs (0 – 12 years)

Small-scale programs (Family Childcare and Multi-Age license types) allow enrollment of up to 8 children of varying ages. The majority of these spaces are offered in the homes of self-employed childcare providers (licensed as Family Child Care and In-Home Multi-Age Care), while a smaller number of small-scale programs are available outside of a residential homes (licensed as Multi-Age Care, or Group Child Care).

The number of home-based childcare spaces licensed in Vancouver has steadily decreased over the past decade. Family Child Care currently comprises 15% of all licensed full-day spaces in Vancouver, down from 25% in 2016.

Table 3: Licensed Childcare Types Serving Children 5 Years and Under

BC License Categories	Ages Served	Full- or Part-Day	Number of Spaces (2021)*	% of all spaces serving ages 0-5yr *
Group Child Care (Under 36 Months)	0 to 3	Full-day	1232	15%
Group Child Care (30 Months to School Age)	3 to 5	Full-day	3519	42%
Multi-Age Child Care	0 to 12	Full-day	96	1%
Family Child Care (incl. in-home Multi-Age Care)	0 to 12	Full-day	878	10%
Preschool (30 Months to School Age)	3 to 5	Part-day	2413	29%
Occasional Child Care	18 months to 12 years	Part-day (max 8 hrs/day or 40 hrs/month)	274	3%
TOTAL			8412	100%

*For programs serving broader age ranges, figures represent estimated number of spaces serving ages 0-5

School-Age Childcare Programs (5 – 12 years)

School-age care programs provide licensed care to elementary school children ages 5 to 12 before and/or after school hours - typically between 7:30am- 9:00am and 3:00-6:00pm, helping families to match hours required in a standard workday. These programs necessarily take place on or very near, school property, unless safe transportation to a more distant location can be provided. Until 2021, there was only one licensed category for school-age care in BC: *Group Child Care - School Age*. Two new categories were added in 2021: *School Age Care on School Grounds*, and *Recreational Care*.

Going forward, the *School Age Care on School Grounds* category will be applied to programs taking place on school grounds only, whereas the *Group Child Care - School Age* category will be reserved for programs in community-based facilities. A third licensing category, *Recreational Care*, applies to both indoor and outdoor settings (e.g. public parks) for programs that offer licensed care on a drop-in basis.

Table 4: Licensed Childcare Group Types Serving School-Age Children (5-12 years)

BC License Categories	Location	Number of Spaces (2021)	% of all spaces serving ages 5-12
Group Child Care - School Age (before and after school)	Community-based facilities*	5,514	100%*
School Age Care on School Grounds* (before and after school)	On school grounds	0	0%
Recreational Care* (after school hours only)	Indoor or outdoor settings (but not in family dwellings)	0	0%

* Many existing programs operating on school property that are currently licensed as “Group Child Care School Age” are being relicensed as “School Age Care on School Grounds”.

** School age children may also access in-home family and multi-age childcare programs.

5.2 Childcare Supply in Vancouver by Provider Type (Auspice) and Ownership

Auspice

'Auspice' refers to the type of organization that provides childcare services in a facility²⁸. Childcare programs are operated by three broad types of provider, listed here in order of prevalence in Vancouver:

- **Non-profit organizations:** Non-profit organizations are independent, democratic organizations that are governed by the BC Society's Act, formed for a purpose other than generating profit, and that frequently have a mandate to provide a public or community service. The majority of all non-profit-operated childcare spaces in Vancouver were created with support from the City of Vancouver, primarily through capital investment in facility development and the provision of nominal leases to non-profit operators.
- **For-profit organizations:** Some childcare programs are operated in the private sector with the intention of creating and distributing a profit to owners, investors and/or shareholders. This category of operator type includes commercial providers operating group care, as well as individuals operating home-based programs as small businesses (family childcare and in-home multi-age care).
- **Public bodies:** Public and government agencies, such as school boards or Indigenous First Nations, may operate licensed childcare, though the proportion of publicly operated licensed spaces in Vancouver is currently very small. BC's School Act was updated in 2020 to encourage school boards to directly operate licensed school age care.

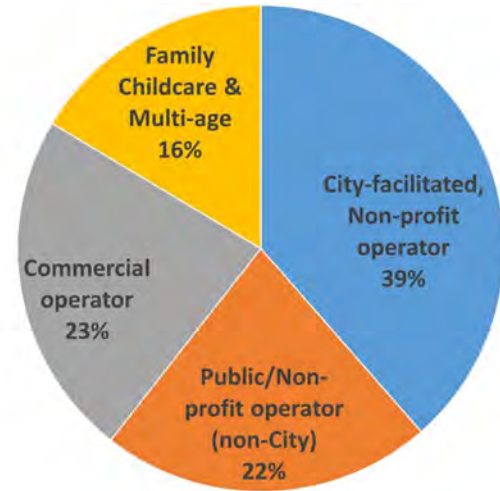


Figure 8. Licensed Full-day Childcare Spaces Serving Ages 0-5, by Provider Type

²⁸ Friesen, Bruce. (1995). "A Sociological Examination of the Childcare Auspice Debate." Childcare Resource and Research Unit. University of Toronto. p8 <https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/op6.pdf>

Ownership

The ownership of licensed childcare facilities (and the land on which they are located) is a separate consideration that is closely connected to auspice of operations. Key owners of land and facilities where childcare is located include:

- Public bodies: Public ownership (or security through long term leases) of buildings, lands and air space parcels plays a critical role in siting licensed childcare in Vancouver, comprising the majority of all licensed childcare spaces serving ages 0-12. The vast majority of childcare spaces licensed in Vancouver's publicly owned facilities are operated by non-profit agencies.²⁹
- Non-profit agencies (non-faith-based): While many non-profit agencies operate spaces in publicly owned facilities, some non-profit agencies also own land or buildings where childcare is licensed. Non-profit ownership is strongly associated with non-profit operations.
- Faith-based organizations: Childcare operated in facilities associated with faith-based organizations accounts for 12% of licensed spaces for ages 0-12 in Vancouver.³⁰ There is a complex relationship between faith-based ownership and auspice of operations. Some faith-based organizations may support non-profit childcare of operations as part of a community service mandate, while others may lease to commercial childcare operators to support financial sustainability of their own operations.
- Private ownership: A proportion of licensed childcare serving ages 0-5 are located in facilities accessed through the private market. This includes most commercially operated group care, as well as the majority of in-home licensed family care programs.

A note on ownership of facilities and sites licensed for School Age Care:

The majority of school-age care programs operate within school facilities, which are primarily publicly owned. This correlates with overwhelmingly non-profit operations, reflecting policies that the Vancouver Board of Education and other local public partners have put in place regarding eligibility for nominal or cost-recovery leases. In Vancouver, approximately 70% of licensed school age care spaces are identified as being located on school properties. An additional 13% are located in sites owned by the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, and 17% are located in privately owned homes or other facilities.

²⁹ The simple majority of licensed spaces for children ages 0-12 years in Vancouver are located on sites owned, leased, or otherwise secured by the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, and the Vancouver School Board. Others are licensed in facilities owned or supported by public employers (principally hospitals) as a support to their workforce.

³⁰ Approximately 1,670 licensed childcare spaces are located on sites owned by places of worship. Of these, approximately 60% are operated by non-profits and 40% by commercial operators. The total number of licensed group care facility based spaces is 1153 for ages 0-12.

5.3 Connections: Provider Type, Ownership, and Program Characteristics

While every program is unique, research has found sector-wide correlations between auspice and facility ownership and, in turn, with affordability, stability, and measures of quality of childcare programs.

5.3.1 Correlations between Auspice and Affordability

Survey data show that in general, lower parent fees are charged by non-profit centres than by for-profit centres in almost every city in Canada.³¹ At childcare centres serving children ages 0-5 years in Vancouver, parent fees at for-profit centres were on average ~61% higher for infant and toddler care, and ~28% higher fees for ages 3 to 5.³²

Small-scale, in-home licensed family childcare programs in Vancouver generally offer comparable affordability to non-profit-operated group care.

5.3.2 Correlations between Auspice and Program Stability

Research shows that overall, non-profit and publicly operated group childcare programs are the most stable in long term operations, while commercial, for-profit programs are more likely to close within four years.³³ Many non-profit operated programs benefit from nominal leases in secured public- and non-profit-owned sites, supporting stable and sustainable operations which often include relatively lower parent fees and higher staff wages.

Increased likelihood of closure and displacement of licensed facilities is correlated with services that are accessed through the private market and that are not secured for long-term childcare use (e.g. through legal covenants, joint-use agreements or less formal means). Commercial childcare programs operate almost exclusively in privately-owned buildings, where childcare use is generally not secured.³⁴

Family childcare is generally found to have the lowest stability of any program type. A 2004 study found that nearly half of BC's licensed family childcare programs closed their businesses over a four-year period.³⁵ Recent data show similar trends.³⁶ Because family childcare programs are home-based businesses that are licensed in the service provider's home, stability may be impacted by the suitability of their housing or precarious tenure, as well as by operators' changing family situations or career-related decisions. Few family childcare locations are

³¹ Friendly, Martha and David Macdonald. (2021). "Sounding the Alarm: COVID-19's impact on Canada's precarious child care sector." Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. p.32

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2021/03/Sounding%20the%20alarm.pdf>

³² Ivanova, Igljika and Lynell Anderson. (2021). "Now is the time for BC to double down on commitment to \$10-a-day childcare." Policy Note. Website. <https://www.policynote.ca/child-care-fees/>

³³ Kershaw, Paul, Barry Forer, and Hillel Goelman. (2004). "Hidden Fragility: Closure among Childcare Services in BC." Canadian Political Science Association. University of Manitoba. Winnipeg, MB. Online. <https://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2004/Kershaw-Goelman.pdf>

³⁴ Friendly, Martha *et al.* (2021). "Risky Business: childcare ownership in Canada, past, present and future." Childcare Resource and Research Unit. University of Toronto. P.14 <https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/Risky-business-child-care-ownership-in-Canada-past-present-future.pdf>

³⁵ Kershaw, Paul, Barry Forer, and Hillel Goelman. (2004). "Hidden Fragility: Closure among Childcare Services in BC." Canadian Political Science Association. University of Manitoba. Winnipeg, MB. Online. <https://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2004/Kershaw-Goelman.pdf>

³⁶ Analysis by City staff tracks trends in childcare licensing data accessed through Westcoast Childcare Resource and Referral.

currently secured for ongoing childcare use, with the exception of a small number of housing units facilitated by the City and dedicated for childcare use.

5.3.3 Correlations between Auspice and Program Quality

Canadian and international studies consistently show a strong correlation between non-profit or public auspice and indicators of childcare quality, including compliance with health and safety regulations³⁷ and inclusion of children with additional support needs.³⁸ A 2018 survey on staff wages and working conditions in Vancouver centres found that a number of key variables in quality were linked to auspice. For example, employees working in for-profit operated group care programs were found to be generally "less well educated, had less ECE-related experience, were relatively underpaid [...] and were less likely to be offered a variety of benefits compared to those working in non-profit programs".³⁹

The level of quality in family childcare settings is found to be highly variable. Caregivers in home-based childcare settings tend to have less formal training in early childhood education

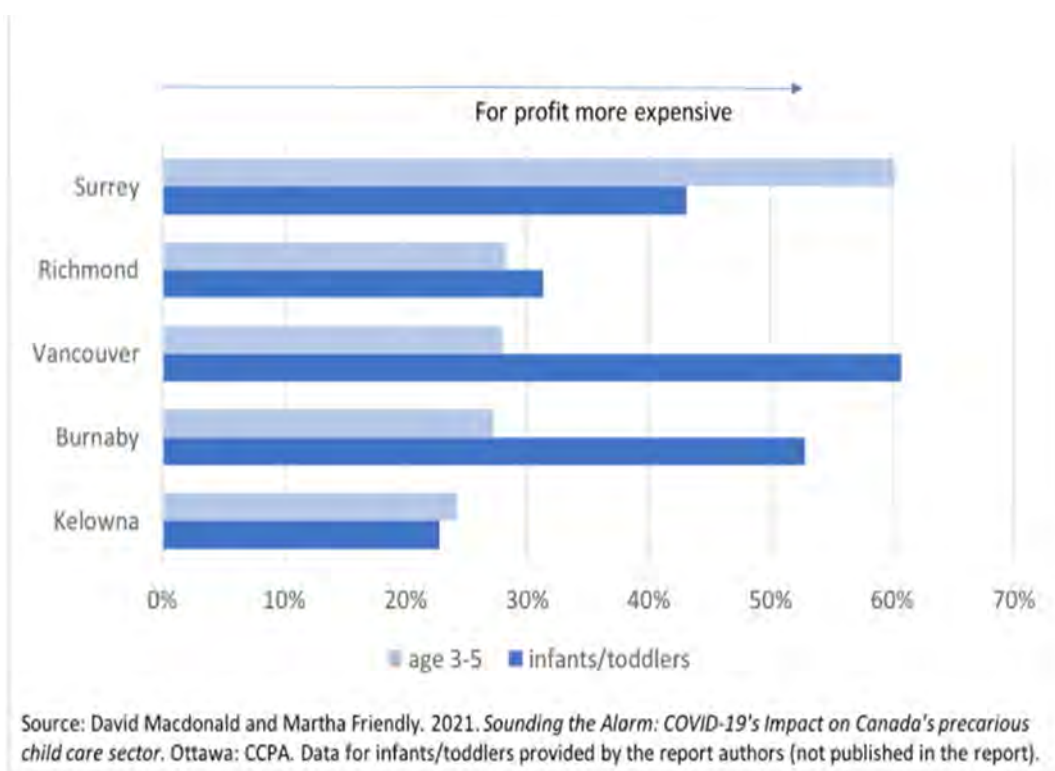


Figure 9. For-profit vs. not-for-profit child care fees in BC, 2020

³⁷ Friendly, Martha *et al.* (2021). pp.10

³⁸ Childcare Resource and Research Unit. "What research says about quality in for-profit, non profit and public childcare." (2011) <https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/What%20research%20says%20about%20quality%20in%20fp%20np%20and%20p%20child%20care.pdf>

³⁹ Forer, Barry. (2018). "2018 Wages and Working Conditions Survey: Vancouver Centre Based Childcare Programs. Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre. P.9. https://www.wstcoast.org/application/files/1215/3776/1533/WCCRC_Vancouver_child_care_wage_survey_exec_sum_web_10_pg_Sept_19_2018-web.pdf

than caregivers in centre-based programs (where some qualifications are required as a condition of licensing). Quality in home-based family childcare has also been associated with access to and intentional use of training and support services available to family childcare providers.⁴⁰ One study found that regardless of training, centre-based childcare programs were generally likely to offer more developmentally stimulating programming than were home-based providers.⁴¹

Another issue of quality across all childcares in Vancouver is the ability for operators to accommodate inclusion of children with extra support needs, activity limitations and disabilities; however this finding is not uniform across all home-based childcare operators, and may depend on access to provincial funding.

5.4 Senior Government Priorities for Childcare Expansion: Provider Type and Ownership

Childcare services in Vancouver and BC include a diverse range of operator types and facility ownership models. While these will remain part of the emerging childcare system ahead, senior governments have signalled a new focus on investments prioritized by public and non-profit auspice and ownership; these new policy directions can be expected to improve the stability of childcare landscapes over time.

The *Canada-Wide ELCC Agreement 2021-2026* commits senior governments to focus childcare expansion efforts on increasing "Indigenous Government, non-profit and/or public, and family-based child care spaces". The agreement further specifies that the priority should be on expanding spaces "in community investments that are long term"⁴², suggesting a future focus on public and non-profit ownership, or otherwise securing facilities for long-term childcare use.

For the City of Vancouver, alignment of childcare expansion supports with senior government priority areas offers the potential to realize the compounding positive impacts of joint planning, policy and investments. Since City investments in childcare have consistently supported civic and non-profit facility ownership, and non-profit childcare operations, and have helped to secure a small number of purpose-built licensed family childcare units, City policies and programs are well positioned to ensure ongoing alignment.

Figure 10 below illustrates the current spectrum of childcare program types that serve children under age 5 in Vancouver by auspice and ownership. It shows that group care operated by the not-for-profit sector comprises the majority of these licensed spaces. For many non-profit-operated programs, access to facilities that are publicly owned by public (civic) bodies and secured for long-term childcare use offer stability for ongoing operations. For others, facilities owned by non-profit societies or places of worship offer a degree of stability, such as in cases where the City has been able to secure childcare use in that space for the long term (typically,

⁴⁰ Doherty, Gillian, B. Forer, *et al.* (2006) "Predictors of quality in family child care" *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21 (3), 296-312. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.07.006>

⁴¹ Booren, Leslie. (2016). "Children in preschools receive higher-quality care than those in home-based care study finds." *Stanford News Centre*. <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/06/children-preschools-receive-higher-quality-care-those-home-based-car>

⁴² "Canada-British Columbia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Childcare Agreement – 2021-2026." Government of Canada. Webpage. <https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/british-columbia-canada-wide-2021.html>

60 years or the life of the building), through a land-use covenant or legal agreement, or where ongoing childcare provision supports an existing mandate of the owner organization. Private childcare facilities are generally more precariously secured through rental of space from a private landowner at market rates, where the use of these premises for childcare purposes is dependent on the ongoing relationship of owner and tenant, and where the lease terms can change and rental rates can rise steeply in a short period of time, leading to more instability in childcare operations.

Figure 10 also identifies coordinated focus areas for childcare infrastructure expansion across levels of government, and alignments with increasing program stability.

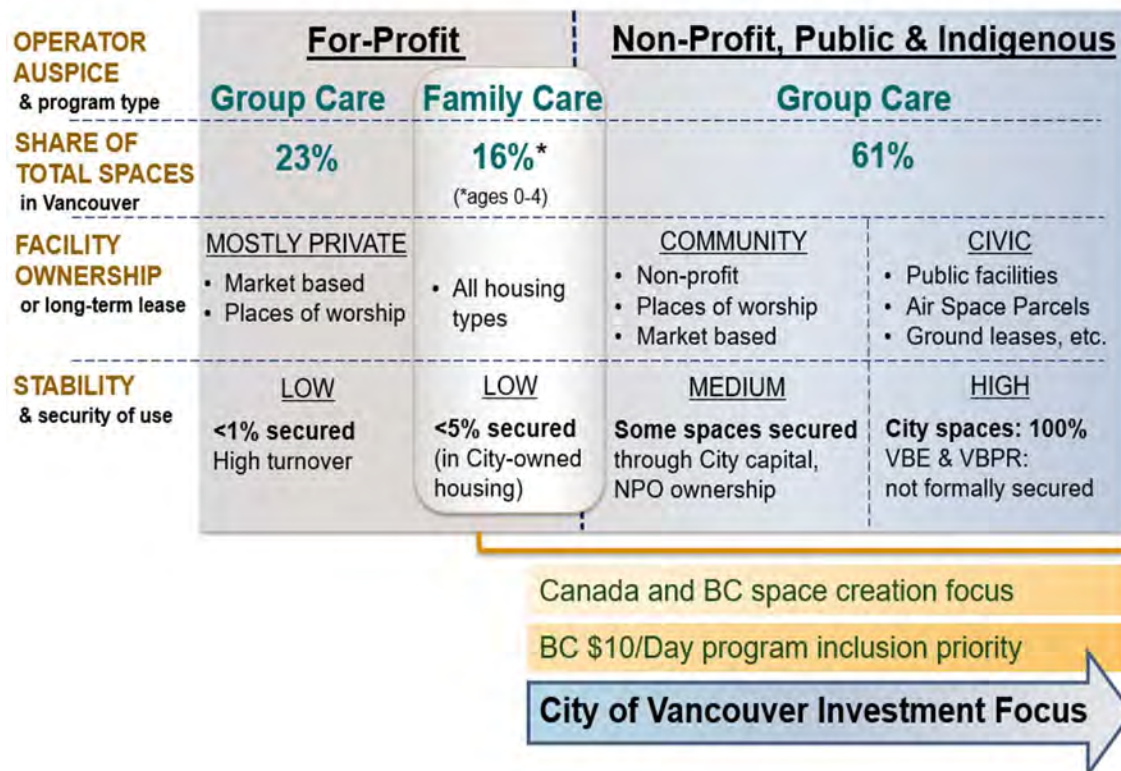


Figure 10. Childcare Expansion Alignments across Governments by Auspice and Ownership (Full-day Care for Ages 0 to 4)

6 Childcare Needs and Gaps in Vancouver

Supporting licensed childcare that meets the needs of Vancouver children and families requires in-depth conversations and ongoing work with partners about the quantities and characteristics of childcare spaces that are needed in the City. In a rapidly-changing childcare landscape, previous assumptions and analyses of childcare need may be less accurate than before. In the years ahead, new conversations with families, childcare operators, senior governments, employers, and others will be needed to refine understandings of childcare need and gaps in Vancouver.

The present discussion of licensed childcare need and gaps will consider:

- Diversity of family structures, and cultures and composition, as they relate to childcare needs, and inequities in access to licensed childcare;
- Specific needs of Indigenous families and increasing the supply of culturally anchored Indigenous-led programs
- Use of quantitative modelling to estimate overall childcare need
- Gaps and misalignments between childcare need and supply by program type and geography

Cultural and linguistic gaps continue to exist throughout the childcare sector, disproportionately impacting newcomers and other racialized communities. The City is committed to developing a stronger understanding of what is needed to achieve cultural safety in the context of early learning and childcare. This understanding, and the actions that will follow, will be developed in close consultation with Indigenous-led organizations, community, senior governments, civic partners and non-profit operators.

6.1 Diversity of Early Learning and Childcare Needs and Gaps

A truly universal system requires childcare to be safe, inclusive, universally accessible and affordable for all families. However, while many families share a common experience of needing access to childcare - to support children's healthy development and to enable parents or guardians to participate in the paid workforce - some families continue to face additional barriers to accessing care.

As discussed in section 5.2 above, Indigenous children and families face unique barriers and gaps that are underscored by rights to self-determination and access to early education that is supportive of strong cultural well-being. In the current childcare landscape, many families (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) face barriers related to affordability, inclusion, hours of care, and cultural safety.

6.1.1 Gaps in Affordable Childcare

Affordability is a critical part of a universally accessible system of early learning and childcare. Families unable to afford childcare fees must rely on unlicensed informal care or be excluded from the workforce, exacerbating disproportionate early education gaps among children from families with low incomes.

Childcare fees in Vancouver represent a significant monthly expense for families with young children, second only to housing. Due to an extremely limited supply and availability of licensed

spaces, many families are forced to select high--fee childcare programs, many of which charge upwards of \$2,000/month per child. For families fortunate enough to secure a space in a \$10aDay ChildCareBC centre (a Provincially-funded program that has been phasing in low-cost childcare for families), monthly fees are only \$200/month per child.

As of April 2022, there were approximately 100 childcare spaces in Vancouver participating in the \$10aDay program, which accounts for approximately 16% of existing full-day spaces for children 5 years and under, but only 8% of the estimated need in Vancouver.⁴³

Fees are generally highest for programs serving children under 3 years, reflecting the higher operational costs associated with maintaining the higher staff--to-child ratios required for safe supervision of infants and toddlers. In general, for all licensed programs, programs operated by private, for-profit agencies charge the highest fees (see section 4.3.1 “Correlations between Auspice and Affordability”).

A 2019 cross-Canada study of childcare fees found that average childcare fees in Vancouver fall within the mid-range of Canadian cities outside Quebec.⁴⁴ While the childcare system in each province is unique, high fees generally reflect the cost of delivering childcare services without a robust public system of funding supports.⁴⁵ In comparison, Quebec's universal system sets parent fees at \$179 per month.

Childcare affordability remains a challenge for families in Vancouver with low incomes, as well as for families with moderate incomes that may not be eligible for provincial childcare subsidy (generally capped at an annual income of \$111K). This means that for a two-parent family with two children, ages 1 and 4, earning a family income of \$112K, and paying childcare fees at the citywide average, childcare would make up approximately 26% of their household income as shown in the affordability analysis in *Figure 11*.

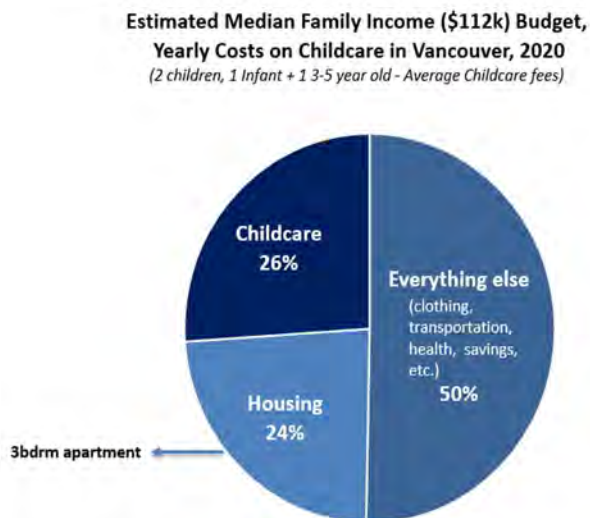


Figure 11. City of Vancouver Affordability Analysis – Sources: Living Wage Calculator 2019; CHMA 2020 rental reports; Statistics Canada - Census 2016; Westcoast Childcare 2020 Fee Survey.

Childcare affordability is in the process of being transformed, with new provincial and federal government commitments to reduce parent fees by an average of 50% by December 2022, and

⁴³ Utilizing quarterly WCCRC childcare supply tracking for Vancouver (Q1 2022) these numbers were obtained by referencing the BC list of prototype sites (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/running-daycare-preschool/10-a-day-childcarebc-centres>) and then dividing total current licensed supply (excluding LRNR category) against the number of spaces noted and listed on the prototype site list.

⁴⁴Friendly, Martha and David Macdonald. (2010). “Childcare Fees in Canada 2019.”Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2020/03/In%20progress_Child%20care%20fees%20in%20Canada%20in%202019_march12.pdf

⁴⁵ Cleveland, Gordon and Michael Krashinsky. (2004). “Financing ECEC Services in OECD Countries.” University of Toronto. Section 38. <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/28123665.pdf>

to further achieve a \$10/day average fee for licenced childcare for children 5 years and under by 2026. The impacts of these new affordability measures on the demand for licensed childcare is unknown, but could reasonably be expected to increase demand.

6.1.2 Gaps in Inclusive Childcare

Inclusive childcare accommodates children of all backgrounds and abilities by removing barriers and ensuring that enhanced learning supports are available to children with additional needs. Senior governments estimate that 1 in 10 children may require enhanced support to participate in childcare,⁴⁶ and Census 2016 data show that approximately 2% of children ages 0-14 years in Vancouver have some form of activity limitation.⁴⁷

Although one of the foundational principles of the BC Early Learning Framework is that "early years spaces are inclusive"⁴⁸, many families of children with additional support needs face additional barriers to childcare access across BC. In addition to long waitlists for childcare spaces, families of children with additional support needs must also apply for and wait to access Supported Child Development (SCD) and Aboriginal Supported Child Development (ASCD) services in order for their children to safely participate in programs. Some inclusive childcare programs provide additional staffing supports to bridge the gap between the needs of undiagnosed children (or those awaiting funding) and the additional supports needed for them to safely participate. The full magnitude of this access gap for children with additional support needs in Vancouver is unknown.

6.1.3 Gaps in Flexible Care and Extended Service Hours

Full-day licensed childcare services in Vancouver and across Canada are almost universally available on weekdays between the hours of 7am and 6pm. Fewer than 2% of child care centres across Canada offer some form of non-standard hour child care; care overnight or on weekends is very rare.⁴⁹ Canada-wide, 3% of families identify a lack of flexible hours in care as a reason they do not use licensed childcare.⁵⁰ For families whose livelihoods require them to work outside standard childcare hours, many are forced to forgo licensed care.

Families needing childcare during early mornings and later evenings, weekends and/or statutory holidays are likely to rely on alternatives to licensed care, such as neighbours or family, hiring a nanny, or working opposite shifts with co-parents.

For childcare operators, challenges associated with operational funding and labour shortages make extended service hours largely unfeasible under existing provincial funding models.⁵¹ The

⁴⁶ 2021. "Order in Council No. 426." Order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Provincial Government of B.C. https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/oic/oic_cur/0426_2021

⁴⁷ Census 2016. Within BC as a whole, approximately 3.6% of children ages 0-14 have some form of activity limitation.

⁴⁸ Ministry of Education. 2020. "BC Early Learning Framework: A Guide for Families." Provincial Government of B.C. p. 45 <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/early-learning/teach/earlylearning/elf-a-guide-for-families.pdf>

⁴⁹ Fraser, Ley *et al.* 2021. "Non-standard work and child care in Canada: A challenge for parents, policy makers, and child care provision." Childcare Research and Resource Unit. Childcare Canada. Website.

<https://childcarecanada.org/publications/other-publications/21/06/non-standard-work-and-child-care-canada-challenge-parents>

⁵⁰ 2019. Survey on Early Learning Child Care Arrangements (SELCCA). Statistics Canada. Webpage.

<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&Id=1204606>

⁵¹ Friendly, Martha *et al.* 2021. "Risky Business: childcare ownership in Canada, past, present and future." Childcare Resource and Research Unit. University of Toronto.

<https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/Occasional%20paper%20No.29%20%5BRevised,%20Sept%2016%20.pdf>

few group care programs in BC that do currently offer extended or overnight services typically receive additional funding from employers who see direct benefit between the provision of non-standard childcare services and their operations.

Considerations regarding flexible and extended hour childcare are explored further in the report *Childcare That Works: Extended Hour and 24 Hour Childcare in Vancouver (2022)*.

6.2 Indigenous Childcare Need, Supply, and Gaps

6.2.1 Supply of Indigenous Childcare in Vancouver

The Canada-wide 2017 [Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework](#) recognizes the importance of culturally-safe ELCC spaces for connecting young Indigenous children to their languages and cultures as outlined by UNDRIP and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. At present, in Vancouver, there are only two off-reserve Indigenous-led providers in the City. As demographic trends indicate a growing urban Indigenous population in Vancouver, especially among children under 12 years, service gaps for culturally safe and Indigenous-led childcare are widening. Although the Childcare Licensing Regulations require that a provider ensure that they are “providing a comfortable atmosphere in which children can feel proud of their cultural heritage and cultural sharing is encouraged”⁵², most non-Indigenous-led operators are not yet equipped to integrate program elements considered culturally safe to urban Indigenous families in particular.

Defining Cultural Safety and Humility

The BC First Nation Health Authority (FNHA) defines cultural safety as “an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the health care system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving health care.”

Cultural humility is defined as “a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another’s experience.”

– from “*Creating a Climate for Change*” First Nations Health Authority Report

Two part-day Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) programs are currently located in Vancouver, with one full-time program about to open. AHS programs are administered by the Public Health Agency of Canada. The former AHS programs are operated by BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, and the latter will be operated by Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society. AHS programs serve children ages 3 to 5, offering childcare that is focused on Indigenous pedagogy, culture and language at no cost to eligible families. Spaces are extremely limited relative to the population of urban Indigenous children, which means that most are unable to secure a space.

⁵² 2007. “Child Care Licensing Regulations.” Provincial Government of B.C. British Columbia, Victoria. Online. https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/332_2007#ScheduleG

6.2.2 Gaps in Indigenous Childcare Provision

Some of the barriers to creating Indigenous ELCC programs spaces relate to the licensing process and requirements; the “lack of Indigenous control over planning, design and delivery of programs;”⁵³ and a lack of a qualified Indigenous staff. Combined with ongoing underfunding of Indigenous ELCC programs, and confusion around whose responsibility Indigenous childcare is among senior levels of government, these barriers have hindered Indigenous providers from expanding services.⁵⁴

The 2021 Canada-BC Childcare Agreement commits to developing a collaborative plan "with relevant First Nations and Métis Nation organizations in BC to ensure that Indigenous children residing in BC will have access to affordable, quality and culturally appropriate ELCC."⁵⁵ The Agreement does not directly address how the needs of urban Indigenous families will be met.

The Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council recently conducted a survey among urban Indigenous families whose children attend Indigenous-led ELCC programs. Key findings from respondents to the survey include:

- Responses related to Indigenous-run programs:
 - Most Indigenous families prefer Indigenous-led childcare services;
 - Families are keenly aware of space shortages and consequently question whether they should “save the space” for another family;
 - Many urban Indigenous children are disconnected from their traditional lands, culture and identity, so families seek opportunities to connect children to that knowledge; and
 - Non-Indigenous foster parents found they were welcomed into Indigenous childcare programs and not judged.

- Responses related to non-Indigenous-run programs:
 - Indigenous families using mainstream providers childcares indicated they didn’t see themselves reflected in the programs;
 - Families experience systemic racism and fear child apprehension is an ever-present threat. This perceived threat translates into a fear of sharing personal information out of worry that misunderstandings may lead to child apprehension, or unwanted interactions with child protection services;
 - Families struggle to enroll because of long waitlists or other barriers, and some families reported that programs were openly discriminatory towards families on subsidy; and
 - There is a desire to attend mainstream childcare that is culturally safe and accessible.

⁵³ Gerlach, Alison *et al.* 2021. “Structural Challenges and Inequities in Operating Urban Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare Programs in British Columbia.” *Journal of Childhood Studies*. Vol.48:2. P.2. <https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/19581>

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 2-4.

⁵⁵ 2021. “Order in Council No. 426.” Order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Provincial Government of B.C. https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/oic/oic_cur/0426_2021

In general there is an unmet need to expand licensed full-day, and extended-hours childcare services, as well as a desire for more land-based, Indigenous-led childcare programming. Additionally, there is need to co-locate childcare with other services in a hub/wrap around service model that can acknowledge the needs of the Urban Indigenous population due to the continued displacement and impacts of colonization in institutions across Canada and Vancouver.⁵⁶

In addition to challenges with licensing requirements, City planning processes are a challenge for Indigenous communities to navigate. Indigenous partners have advised that City processes operate within a Western worldview that does not easily facilitate close partnership with Indigenous operators' way of working. Some problematic examples raised by the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council include:

- A constant sense of urgency to “fix problems;”
- Working under tight timelines;
- Assuming that there is generally only “one right way” to do things;
- A broad push for quantity over quality;
- “Worshipping” the written word to get anything done (the need for formality over informal working relations); and
- Over-reliance on quantitative data to drive decisions without greater human and relationship-based considerations being taken into account.

The City and senior governments need to develop strong working relationships with Indigenous childcare stakeholders in order to create new, culturally safe systems and approaches to childcare development.⁵⁷

6.3 Estimating Overall Childcare Need through Quantitative Modelling

While it is clear that the supply of licensed childcare in Vancouver is inadequate to meet demands, a more nuanced analysis is necessary to inform planning for childcare development.

City of Vancouver staff use modelling to estimate the number of childcare spaces currently needed in the city for each relevant age category (under 36 months, 3-5 years, and 5-12 years). The model includes labour force participation assumptions for the families of each age category of children along with other key factors to generate estimates of childcare need. Comparison to the supply of licensed childcare spaces enables the City to identify gaps at the city-wide level, as well as by local area.

As implementation of a public system of universally accessible and affordable childcare is led by senior governments, demand for licensed childcare will likely increase significantly from current estimates. Updates to the City's model will be required to reflect changing demand. Based on current conservative estimates, Vancouver's childcare supply would need to grow by approximately 7,500 additional full-day spaces for children 5 years and under, and by approximately 8,500 spaces for children ages 5-12 years to meet demand.

⁵⁶ Conversations with Sherry Small, Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council Oct. 2021.

6.4 Childcare Need and Gaps by License Type and Geography

In addition to an undersupply of licensed childcare spaces city-wide, there is a significant mismatch between the supply of spaces that are available, and what most families need. For example, there is an oversupply of part-day preschool programming city-wide that most working families cannot take advantage of since it only provides 2 to 4 hours of care each day, and often does not operate every day. There are also geographical inequities in the availability of childcare spaces, with a greater supply in areas of high development.

Mismatches between childcare need and supply have arisen in the absence of a coordinated childcare system, and as a result of insufficient supports from senior governments to ensure operational viability of the types of programs that families need.

6.4.1 Gaps in the Supply of Childcare by License Type

Undersupply of Full-day Childcare

With high staffing requirements, "infant and toddler" programs serving children under age three are financially challenging to operate. Viability of these programs has historically depended on co-location with programs serving older children, where surplus revenues can more feasibly be generated. Multi-program centres serving children of different ages support operational viability as well as continuity of care as children grow. The City and Vancouver Board of Education have recently partnered to co-locate childcare centres serving children younger than school age on the rooftops of elementary schools. This arrangement allows children to seamlessly transition from early learning and childcare, to elementary school and school age childcare all on the same site. These are the kinds of elegant and supportive childcare solutions that can help simplify busy day-to-day lives for working families.

Oversupply of Part-day Preschool

For decades, part-day, part-week preschool programs have broadly supported families with children ages 3 to 5 years, initially intended to provide socialization opportunities and school readiness support to children with a stay-at-home caregiver. While preschool continues to provide affordable and accessible part-time early education for many families today, with an operating model that can be financially self-sustaining for operators when programs are fully enrolled, evidence shows an evolution in the need for and use of preschool.

Currently, Vancouver's part-day preschool supply also exceeds estimated need by 189%, based on the City's childcare needs model. Demand for part-day, part-week care has decreased with workforce changes over the last few decades. In particular, a significant increase of labour force participation among mothers with young children, which rose from 27.6% in 1976 to 64.4% in 2009, has increased the demand for childcare during the hours of a standard workweek.⁵⁸

There is also evidence indicating that in Vancouver, some families enrol their children in preschool programs when they are unable to find more suitable childcare arrangements. A 2019

⁵⁸ Statistics Canada. "Table 5 Employment Rate of Women with Children by age of youngest child, 1976 to 2009." Government of Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11387/tbl/tbl005-eng.htm>

survey of parents with a child enrolled in preschool in Vancouver⁵⁹ found that while half preferred their current preschool arrangements over other forms of care, most of the remainder stated they would prefer full-day childcare. A third of enrolled children also attended other regularly scheduled childcare arrangements, as parents combined multiple part-day options to cover their childcare needs.

The number of licensed preschool spaces in Vancouver has decreased by nearly one quarter since 2017. Some former preschool sites have undergone retrofits in order to operate as full-day group care programs; more of this type of conversion is expected moving forward.

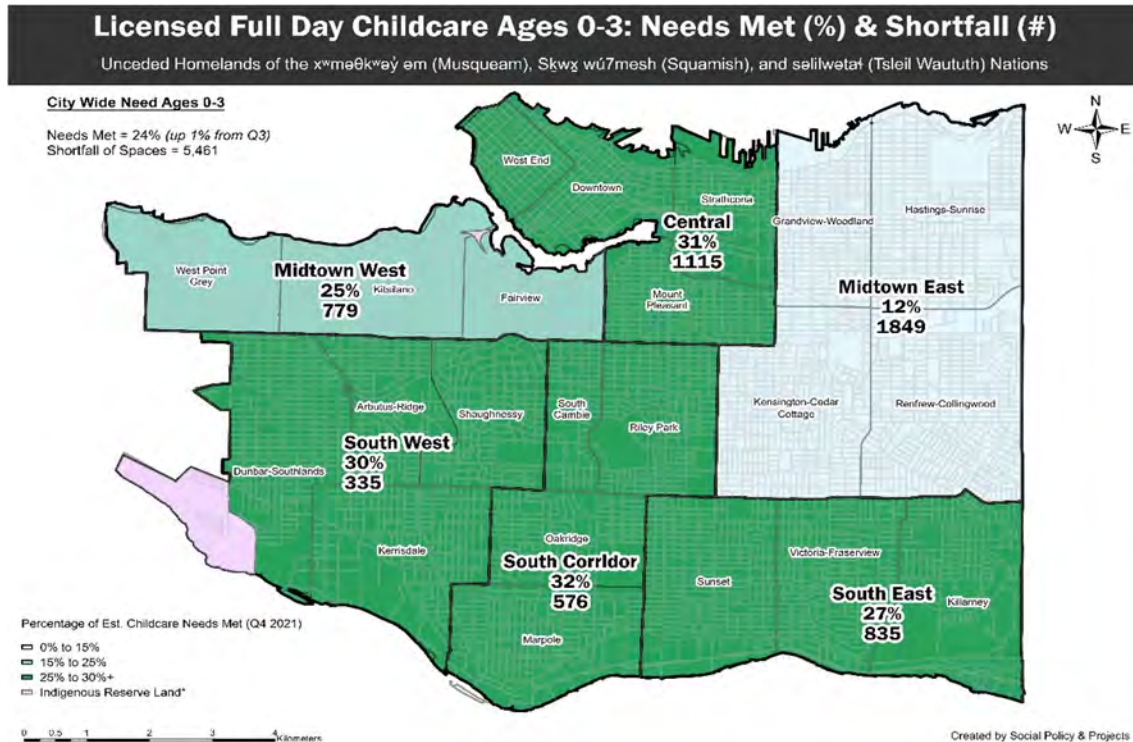


Figure 13. City of Vancouver Childcare Estimated Needs Maps Ages 0-3. December 2021. Sources: Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre Capacity Report, City of Vancouver Childcare Needs Modelling

⁵⁹ Beach, Jane and Barry Forer. 2019. "2019 Survey of Parents with Children Enrolled in Vancouver Preschools." Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre. Vancouver, B.C. https://www.wstcoast.org/application/files/6315/7125/0526/2019-09-30_Vancouver_preschool_survey_WEB.pdf

Undersupply of School Age Care (for children 5-12 years)

The City has been working in partnership with the Vancouver Board of Education (VBE) for many years to increase the supply of licensed spaces for school age children on school grounds. In 2018, the VBE signalled that the remaining inventory of school spaces that was allowed for childcare use - mostly shared use of multipurpose rooms, cafeterias and specialty rooms (libraries, music rooms, etc.) - was diminishing. As a result, the City has been working with Vancouver Coastal Health licensing and non-profit partners to explore alternate models of school-age care that are less reliant on indoor spaces at school sites. Currently, an outdoor-based school-age care program is being piloted in the hopes that this approach may be expanded at school sites across the city.

Recent Provincial legislative changes may lead to an expanded role for school boards in increasing supply of school-age care, including a 2020 update to the BC School Act to encourage school boards to directly operate licensed school age care. Since 2021, the Vancouver Board of Education has been involved in the Seamless Day kindergarten program, directly operating some school age care spaces.

In order to rebalance Vancouver's childcare supply to better align with the needs of families, policy makers at all levels of government will need to partner with childcare providers on development of innovative solutions, infrastructure planning, and stable operational supports.

6.4.2 Geographical Inequities in the Supply of Childcare

Childcare access is inequitably distributed across the city, as shown in Figures 14 and 15. Supply gaps are generally largest on the east side of Vancouver, where higher than average numbers of children, visible minorities, Urban Indigenous and/ or newcomer families live. The average household incomes in many east side communities are also lower than in the west side neighbourhoods of Vancouver.

Although the City has contributed to the development of approximately 35% of all licensed childcare spaces in Vancouver, they are not equitably disbursed across all neighbourhoods.

The construction of most City-facilitated childcare centres for children 5 years and under has been funded through developer contributions in the form of Development Cost Levies (DCLs) and Community Amenity Contributions (CACs). As a result, they are situated in areas of high development such as in Downtown and along Cambie Corridor.

Families of children ages 5 to 12 years also face an uneven geographic distribution of school age care, which is dependent on the availability of suitable space in existing school facilities and neighbouring community centres. The City has successfully employed a variety of policy tools, partnerships and funding programs to address childcare need in different areas of the city, including development partnerships and co-location of new facilities with elementary schools and community centres. However, filling longstanding supply gaps in the most underserved areas of the city remains an ongoing challenge.

Childcare needs will continue to change unevenly across different parts of the City. Areas where significant increases in childcare need are anticipated in areas undergoing major developments and new area plans, such as the emerging East Fraserlands community in the southeast part of the City, Jericho Lands and the Squamish First Nation's Seḥákw development in the northwest, and in the Broadway Corridor Plan area.

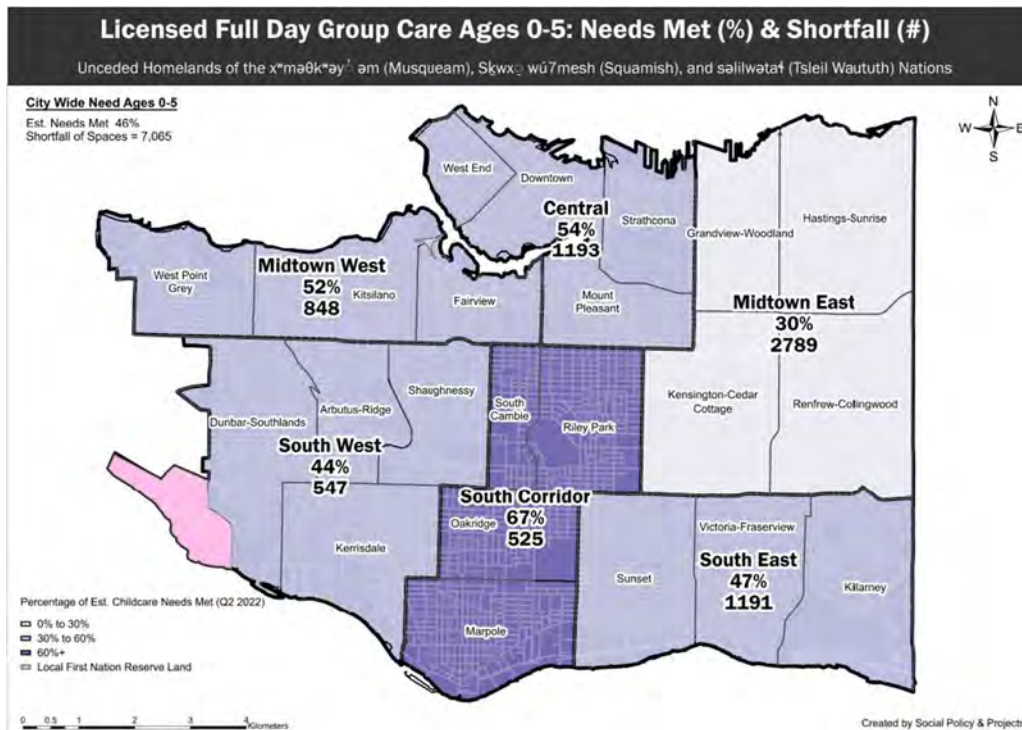


Figure 14. City of Vancouver Childcare Estimated Needs Maps Ages 0-5. June 2022. Sources: Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre Capacity Report, City of Vancouver Childcare Needs Modelling

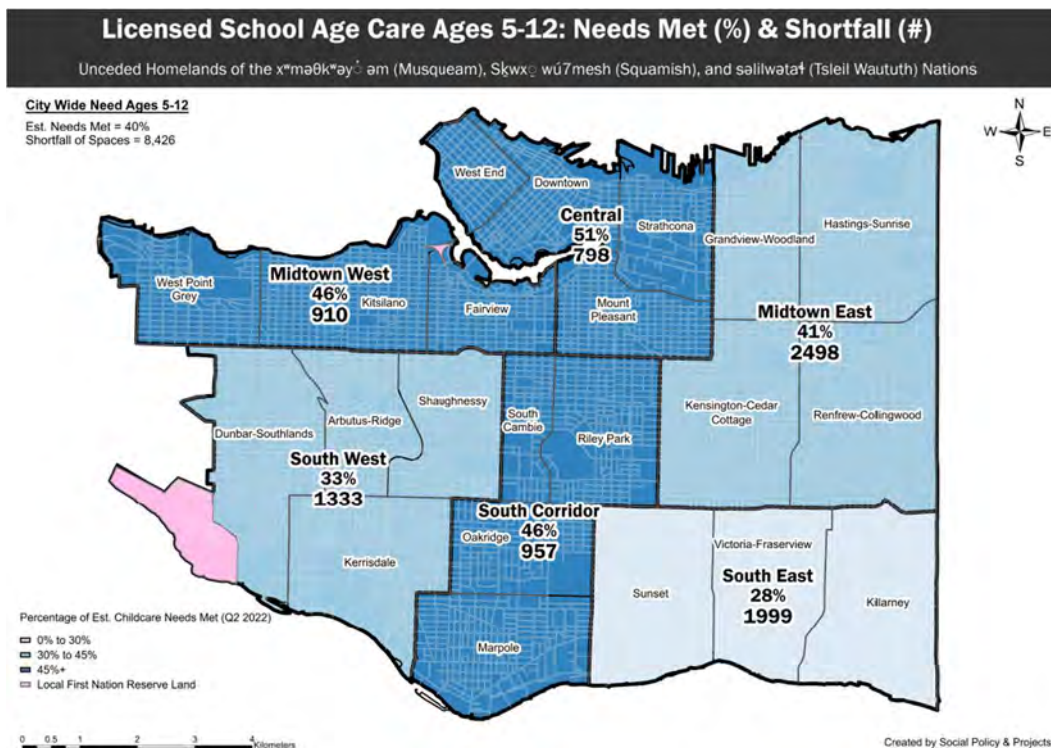


Figure 15. City of Vancouver Childcare Estimated Needs Maps Ages 5-12 by Secondary Boundaries. June 2022. Sources: Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre Capacity Report, City of Vancouver Childcare Needs Modelling

7 Conclusion

This is an unprecedented time for the future of children and families in Vancouver, BC and Canada. In the Canada-BC Canada-Wide ELCC Agreement, senior governments have outlined pivotal new commitments to building an affordable, accessible, universal system of childcare. These recent senior government commitments to ensuring quality, \$10-a-day childcare for children and families have laid the groundwork for a new path for the City of Vancouver to take, channelling future childcare efforts in support of this shared vision.

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