



**Child Care Information Action Project:
2007 Report on Child Care in the Capital Region**

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Victoria, BC

Prepared for PLAY (Understanding the Early Years Project)

By

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Acknowledgements from the Authors of the Report

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1.0 Introduction

This report offers important information from over a dozen child care stakeholders in the Capital Region on the current child care situation in 2007. It is well known that our region, like many others in BC, is under-stress to provide adequate, affordable, quality options for child care for young children and families. From interviews with key informants, three significant barriers to providing care to young children were consistently cited:

- Recruitment and retention of staff
- Lack of availability of child care spaces
- Funding for child care services and programs is insufficient

This report is part of a larger initiative being undertaken by those working together in the early childhood community.

PLAY (Partnership in Learning and Advocacy for Young Children), through the *Understanding the Early Years (UEY)* project¹, has been developing inventories of healthy early childhood programs and services that support families, parents and children (from pre-natal to 6 years of age) in each municipality within the Capital Region. These inventories, in addition to other research and information, will be used to prepare a series of Early Years reports for the region. The purpose of the inventories and the reports is to support community level gathering, interpreting and sharing of meaningful information and resources that can positively affect children 6 and under in local communities.

In a community forum in September 2006, early learning and child care programs and services were recognized as key assets essential for healthy early childhood development. Additionally, in recent strategic planning meetings held by PLAY in 2007, child care was named as a key priority area. As a first step toward mapping and analyzing child care for the region, the project required a better understanding of the current child care situation, as well as the data and information that were available by municipality.

Two contractors, Joanne Cruickshank and Vincenza Gruppuso, worked on the project to undertake key informant interviews with child care stakeholders, identify data sources and to prepare a final report to share the project's findings. This report reflects the work completed between February and May of 2007.

2.0 Methods

2.1. Interviews

Several meetings were held with members of PLAY and the Regional Child Care Council (RCCC) to organize a list of key stakeholders in the community. Fifteen in-depth

¹ The UEY project is funded by the Federal Government of Canada.

interviews were completed; six of the stakeholders identified were unavailable for an interview (refer to Appendix A for the list of stakeholders). Each interview was completed in 1 to 1.5 hours and used a prepared guide (Appendix B) to encourage open-ended responses about their program or service. Each interviewee was provided with an opportunity to read the transcript of their interview and make changes. All interviewees gave their consent to have their names and organizations named in the report. Their responses are summarized in this report.

2.2 Request for Data

Through the interview process, data sources were identified and requests for data were made. The VIHA licensing office, Victoria Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR), and Sooke Westshore CCRR maintain listings of all licensed and license-not-required (LNR) child care facilities. Listing information includes location of the facility by municipality, type of program (e.g., infant/toddler, preschool), and capacity. A summary file of this information is held by the PLAY Coordinator (Child Care Program Listing 30March2007.xls). There are two additional files: one that provides information on newly-opened facilities (01Jan2006 to 31Dec.006; Child Care New Licenses 2006.xls) and another that lists those facilities that have been closed between Jan. 2006 – Dec. 2006 (Child Care Closed 2006.xls). These data can be made public and a version of these files will be shared on the PLAY website.

An important observation was made in the process of identifying available local child care data: much of the information the child care community would like to have on hand is not being collected and/or maintained. There are many reasons for this situation, and examples are shared throughout the report.

2.3 Interview Analysis and Theme Identification

After completion of the key informant interviews, the transcripts were read over with an eye for identifying major themes. The interviews consistently revealed the following barriers to the provision of child care in the Greater Victoria Region:

- Recruitment and retention of staff
- Availability of child care spaces
- Availability of funding for child care services and programs

The report is organized around each of these themes, identifying key issues and the impact these barriers and issues are having on families, community organizations and child care providers.

2.4 Additional Information and Support

A timely contribution to this report was provided through the Labour Market Dialogues project of the Community Council in May 2007. After convening 20 stakeholders (such as employers, community service providers and people experiencing barriers to employment) to discuss how employers in BC's Capital Region could be better supported to hire and retain people experiencing barriers to paid

employment, child care was named as a significant barrier. Consent was received by participants to use their information in this report.²

3.0 Recruitment and Retention

In a letter to Minister of State for Child Care, Linda Reid, Toni Hoyland, Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) President, wrote of her concern about the cancelled Early Learning and Childcare agreement between the provincial and federal governments. She noted that:

Early Childhood services to families are at the brink of crisis in BC with waiting lists in every area of the province and a shortage of early childhood educators in all areas and training for Infant Toddler Educators is inconsistent at best. Recruitment, retention and remuneration of Early Childhood Educators continue to be an issue that must be addressed.³

In the Capital Region, a widely recognized and discussed barrier to providing child care is finding and retaining qualified staff. Key informants named again and again the many issues that make recruiting and retaining qualified staff a significant barrier to providing care for young children, further substantiating the analysis provided in PLAY's first child care report produced in 2006 by Enid Elliot.⁴ The issues include, but are not limited to:

Low Wages

Wages for an ECE qualified individual are reported by some interviewees to fall within the range of \$10 and \$21 (with more wages located at the lower end of the range). For those that work in a union (e.g., CUPE) setting the typical hourly rate is greater than \$19. Pension and other benefits are added to the wage. Nevertheless, these centres face the same challenges with regard to the recruitment of new staff.

Because of the chronic low-level wages for staff assisting children with special needs and the concomitant effect on the skill level and retention of such staff, the Victoria Supported Child Development program (SCDP) has committed funds to increase these wages (i.e., those below \$14.50 per hour). The Victoria SCDP has been working together with operators to develop and implement the Staffing, Wages and Training Plan to raise the ability of operators to attract and retain skilled staff, and to appropriately include children with a variety of developmental challenges.

Lack of Qualified ECE Trained Employees

There is a shortage of ECE trained people available for employment, for relief work or full-time. The Military Family Resource Centre is exploring the possibility of creating a new centre in Esquimalt. Finding Infant/Toddlers qualified staff will pose great difficulties. They also reported that they are in need of a staff person trained to work with children requiring extra support and have had difficulties finding a person with these qualifications. The Blanshard Community Centre closed its Preschool program due to a

² For further information on the Labour Market Dialogues project, contact Ruth Underwood at the Community Council (tel: 383-6166 website: www.communitycouncil.ca). The Community Council also acts as the legal sponsor for the Understanding the Early Years project.

³ Hoyland, Toni. 2007. http://www.ecebc.ca/resources/pdf/letter_lindareid_may06.pdf

⁴ Elliot, Enid. 2006. A Picture of Childcare in the Greater Victoria Region. Partnership in Learning & Advocacy for Young Children. This report can be found on the PLAY website.

staff shortage. Other key stakeholders report that they are working front-line to fill in when staff are off sick or on vacation time.

Funding Instability

The funding provided to the child care sector is documented as being insufficient to meet the actual needs of service providers. In addition, funding has been unreliable due to the on/off again nature of how funds flow to programs and service providers. For example, Camosun reported that due to funding cuts they are unable to offer the Infant/Toddler and Special Needs training component each year. The diploma program was offered at Camosun for 23 years then cut in 2002. It was reinstated in September of 2006 with 12 students registered. These students are scheduled to graduate in June of 2007.

3.1 Local Case Examples

Case examples from key informants are shared in the following section to provide local evidence to demonstrate the severity of the situation on the ground for those who experience the issues most directly. The local case examples also depict how tightly interwoven and complex the issues are that play out in real life settings ranging from support services, (such as the Child Care Resource and Referral, and Supported Child Development Program), child care facilities (including private and publicly owned, First Nations and Military Family Resource Centre operated facilities), and educational and training institutions (such as Camosun College, and the newly established program at Sprott-Shaw Community College).

Victoria Childcare Resource and Referral

The Victoria CCRR strives to maintain a list of qualified staff available to provide substitute (sub) services at early childhood centres and family child care facilities. This “ABC” list uses “ECE” and “Substitute” categories to identify those with and without the ECE certificate or diploma. The number of names on the ABC list is at its lowest level and has been this way for the past two years. There are two care providers on the Substitute list. There are currently 10 providers on the ECE list that primarily want only part-time work. They are often asked if they want to commit to full-time employment. Because 6 of these individuals are currently fulfilling temporary commitments, only 4 individuals remain to fulfill requests from operators and supervisors throughout the city for qualified staff to provide replacement child care services. Effective May 1, 2007, Victoria CCRR will no longer be maintaining the ABC list. It is unknown who will oversee the listing for alternates and subs.

Blanshard Community Centre: City of Victoria

At the time of the interview, the Blanshard Community Centre (BCC) faced the potential closure of the preschool and after-school programs as they were unable to maintain the minimal adult: child staffing ratio required by VIHA. We have recently learned that the preschool program has been closed and is in the process of interviewing applicants for a potential re-opening in September 2007. To date, only one applicant has had the appropriate qualifications but she demanded \$18.50 per hour when BCC can only afford \$15.75. They continue with their search for staff for the preschool program. Most parents with children attending BCC cannot afford a parent portion of fees. Thus, BCC fees are based solely on subsidy rates. The BCC does not have adequate funding to provide the necessary child care programs to support families in this

community. The lack of stability in funding directly influences the stability of the child care workforce; Employees are unwilling and unable to remain in a work place environment where their source of income is continually threatened. While not the focus of this project, we were also informed that the turnover rate for the afterschool position has also been high (i.e., three hiring cycles in a short time period). While there are no formal qualifications for afterschool staff, there is a need for staff to be aware of, and responsive to, the developmental needs of this age group and this places a limit on the pool of available employees. The challenges faced by afterschool programs make it difficult for children entering these programs to maintain or advance early childhood developmental goals.

The outreach worker at BCC notes that the neighbourhood served by the program includes:

- A large percentage of single parents;
- A large number of individuals with low levels of education;
- A high number of individuals with addictions; and,
- A large number of children in the preschool program (i.e., at least 33%) with significant language delays.

The closure of the preschool program forces vulnerable parents and children in this community to seek alternative child care programs. Family child care opportunities within the adjacent Evergreen Terrace neighbourhood (in which many parents who access child care services at BCC reside) are not available because of bylaws forbidding business licenses in subsidized housing complexes. The majority of the families in the area served by BCC do not have vehicles and their ability to use the public transit system to access child care facilities in outlying areas is made difficult by the demands of small children.

Military Family Resource Centre: Esquimalt and Colwood

The general lack of qualified early childhood educators is clearly an issue for the Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC). A written proposal to open two Infant/Toddler centres for a total of 24 spaces and 2 Group centres for 3 – 5 year old children with space for 32 children has been submitted to the Esquimalt Base for funding.⁵ Recruitment of the required licensed educators to maintain the proposed centres will be extremely difficult in the light of the shortage of qualified individuals in the city of Victoria.

The ability for the centre to successfully support and include children with special needs in the existing Colwood program has also been challenging as the operator has had difficulties to find a qualified educator. The lack of staffing has also made it difficult to maintain a list of educators for on-call relief. Staff members often need to work split shifts in the daycare program during sick leave so as to maintain appropriate staff:child ratios.

Saxe Point Day Care: Esquimalt

Meagan Brame, owner of Saxe Point Day Care, recently placed a midweek advertisement in the local Times-Colonist Newspaper for an ECE Certified Care Provider

⁵ Military personnel wishing to relocate to Victoria consistently demand child care options and are quickly informed of the lack of spaces.

for full-time employment. She received three telephone responses within several days and only two had the required qualifications. She was able to recruit one for employment and the employee successfully negotiated a higher rate of pay than that originally offered. Meagan stated that she has been in business for slightly over 10 years and for the first seven and one half years she had little difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff. She also noted that she had very little turn over. In the past year, staffing has been a significant problem because she believes there is a critical shortage of qualified educators. This has forced many operators to outbid other offers with higher wages and benefits.

YM/YWCA: City of Victoria

The manager at the Victoria West YM/YWCA reports that she is often required to fill in for staff that are absent due to illness or vacation as there are no substitute staff available on an on-call basis. The staff continually work with limited resources and the demanding needs of children. Such factors lead to the burnout of the staff with the concomitant reluctance to remain in the field.

Songhees Pre-School:

Songhees First Nations Child Care Centre's manager is required to fill in for staff that are absent due to illness or vacation as they do not have substitute staff available on an on-call basis. They continually work with limited resources and the demanding needs of the children and families who use their services. Such factors lead to the burnout of the staff. Staff members have little to no program planning time and they lack the ability to access paid professional development days because of the lack of additional qualified staff needed to maintain the necessary adult: child ratios while staff attend to professional duties. The wages at this centre do not adequately compensate staff for any additional time and attention to workplace demands and this limits the centre's ability to retain qualified staff.

Burnside Gorge Community Association- Victoria Family Self Sufficiency Program

Lack of affordable and appropriate childcare is a major concern for the many of families involved in the Victoria FSS program. FSS is a three-year program that supports people as they move forward in their lives. The present program offers service to 80 participants and their families. One problem for many parents is that the hours of work in their job do not match with the hours that most daycare facilities are open. This means that parents often must pay for babysitting on top of their day care fees in order to work a full day or shift at their jobs. For people who work evenings and weekends, the challenge of being able to find (and afford) appropriate childcare can be very stressful. Many times people have had to turn down or leave jobs because of childcare related problems.

Spectrum Job Search

Parent-clients of Spectrum Job Search report having had a difficult time finding an adequate child care provider. For example, it might take them six months to a year. They have difficulty filling out the forms for child care subsidy as they are quite complex and lengthy at 10 pages per application. Spectrum has had clients request retraining

funds from the federal government because they cannot find child care that fits the hours of work that they are able to secure. Spectrum reports they have clients who cannot find childcare, and consequently have given up the search for work altogether. They have two specific stories of women who gave up finding a job with an employer as they could not afford to work because they had more than one child and the subsidy does not cover all costs incurred. As an alternative, both women decided to provide day care for other children. Adequate spaces and adequate subsidies are necessary to enable parents to work.

Supported Child Development Program: Region Wide

In general, staff shortages are a major problem and limit the Supported Child Development Program's (SCDP) ability to fulfill its mandate to include children who require extra support (because they have a developmental delay or disability in physical, cognitive, communicative or social/emotional/behavioural areas) in a child care setting.⁶ The program has had difficulty finding qualified staff for the Consultant positions; assistants in child care programs; and trainers. The search for qualified staff for the Inclusion Community Contracts⁷ took months to fulfill and delayed the initiation of the program. Staffing challenges are evident because of low wages for early childhood educators. Often wages for staff working with individuals with special needs are lower than other staff members working in a program. This challenge was further exacerbated by the elimination of the second year options of the Camosun College Early Childhood Education Diploma program. This program offered courses toward the infant/toddler certificate and the special needs certificate. The second year options have since been re-instated.

Because of the chronic low-level wages for staff assisting children with special needs and the concomitant effect on the skill level and retention of such staff, the Victoria SCDP has committed funds to increase these wages (i.e., those below \$14.50 per hour). The program has been working together with operators to develop and implement the Staffing, Wages and Training Plan to raise the ability of operators to attract and retain skilled staff, and to appropriately include children with a variety of developmental challenges.

Camosun College: ECE Training and Education

Linda Leone, program leader and instructor in the Early Childhood Care and Education program at Camosun College, admitted that the majority of the students currently completing the ECE Certificate program will most likely be hired by their practicum supervisors prior to completion of the course. She also noted that a significant number of students do not continue with front line work within the child care system and instead use their credits in Early Childhood Care and Education toward studies in Child and Youth Care or other Child Family/Child Studies programs. This further limits the number of qualified early childhood educators available to meet the

⁶ Office of the Provincial Advisor, Supported Child Development Program, and Ministry of Child and Family Development. *Supported Child Development Program – Policies and Procedures Manual Working Draft*. February 2005. Available at: <http://www.scdp.bc.ca/>.

⁷ The Victoria SCDP has invested one-time funding received from MCFD in a new initiative aimed at enhancing adult: child ratios (i.e., funds to hire an additional staff member) in centres described by the Early Development Inventory [Janus, M., & Offord, D. R. (2000). Readiness to learn at school. *ISUMA Journal of Policy*, 1, 1-75.] as vulnerable.

needs of the community. It is also worth noting that it is only in the past year that the opportunity to obtain the ECE Diploma second-year courses has become available. The college suspended the courses for a few years due to provincial funding cuts. Again, this has put severe constraints on the number of qualified educators especially those with additional specialized certificates.

An Early Childhood Education Certificate may be obtained at Camosun College and the course work is intended to be completed in 10 months. Students who seek to obtain an Early Childhood Education Diploma enroll in a second year of studies. At the completion of the Diploma course, students will have met the theory and practicum expectations for supporting children with special needs and/or infant/toddler care. The theory courses related to the Specialty Licenses are offered alternately every other year. An additional 500 hours work experience is required by the ECE Registry of BC prior to application for a license to practice as an Early Childhood Educator and a student (with assistant status) arranges this work experience directly with a licensed early childhood program.

Students can also obtain an Early Childhood Education Certificate or Diploma through distance education programs. A few of the distance education programs are offered through Northern Lights College, Lethbridge Community College, or Pacific Rim College. Distance education programs have higher tuition fees and for many students this removes the opportunity to obtain the certificate or diploma through this venue. However, distance courses can be completed over an extended period of time and thus provide the additional opportunity to work and complete studies simultaneously.

The current ECE certificate program at Camosun College began with 34 students. There are 17 students enrolled in the diploma program.

Sprott-Shaw Community College: ECE Training & Education

In January of 2007, Sprott-Shaw Community College received Interim Approval from the Early Childhood Education Registry of B.C. On Monday, March 26, 2007 they opened their Early Childhood Education Basic Certificate program in Victoria ; it is a full-time program to be completed in 45 weeks.⁸ Sprott-Shaw is also developing an ECE post-basic Diploma course outline which will be 900 hours long and includes training for working with infants and toddlers and children with special needs.

Like other ECE training programs, Sprott-Shaw will submit annual training profiles to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) for approval, which will ensure that students who successfully complete their programs will be eligible to apply to MCFD for their licenses to work in the field. Based on enrollment in their ECE programs already operating in Penticton and New Westminster, they anticipate approximately 40 students this year will participate in their program here in Victoria. They anticipate a high graduation rate based on low attrition rates in their other programs.

3.3 Community Impacts of Child Care Staff Shortages

From the documented case examples, there are clear negative impacts being experienced due to the inability to successfully recruit and retain qualified staff to child

⁸ For more information, refer to their website at: <http://www.sprottshaw.com/programs/health-social-dev.html#prog3>.

care centres in the Capital Region. Those that have been documented in the case examples include:

- **Centre Closures** – There are many centre closures due to the shortage of trained staff as noted with the closure of the Blanshard Community Centre Preschool as just one example.
- **Unreliability of Child Care Provisioning** – The reliability of child care for parents is dependant on the staff. If the care provider is sick or the centre does not have back-up staffing, the centre will need to close leaving the parent to find alternate care during the closure or having to stay home and miss a day of work. As reported by many parents, this is a financial hardship, but also a source on on-going stress (see Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Government of Canada’s Child Care Spaces Initiative, 2007).⁹
- **High Child to Adult Ratios** – When a staff member is sick and a back-up staff person is not available, the child to adult ratio is at risk. Licensing has strict guidelines for the number of children to staff ratios and due to a shortage of trained educators in the community, most centres have the maximum number of children registered for the number of staff employed. If a staff member is away, the manager or coordinator for the centre will step in to cover and if that cannot be arranged, either a number of children will not be allowed to attend the centre that day or the facility will be closed for the day.
- **High Employee Turnover-** Low wages of care providers has had a direct impact on the ability of centres to retain staff in the Capital Region. With the added challenge of funding instability, trained ECEs are making choices to leave the sector in favour of employment that is more secure and better paying.
- **Stress on Families and Care Providers** –_With the shortage of child care spaces, families are securing spots for their infant children prior to the birth of the baby. These families will put their name on several wait lists in hopes of securing a spot for their child when their maternity leave is over. Parents who have care for their child and have a centre close are often left with only one month’s notice to find alternate care arrangements. With a shortage of available spots, these parents juggle their work day with making time to find an available care provider to interview in hopes of arranging care for their child. In some cases, parents actually have to quite their jobs as they just never find care. The care providers are aware of the desperation these parent’s face and often contact the referral staff at the CCRR to request that their name not be given out to parents as they have no available spots. As the case examples demonstrate, staff and managers are under considerable stress and burden to provide quality care, and receive low pay and increased work loads during a time of increased community need for their services.
- **Unstable Numbers of Qualified Care Providers Graduating and Entering the Field Each Year** – As documented by the ECE training program at Camosun, there is an unstable and inadequate supply of trained staff graduating each year

⁹ Refer to Government of Canada’s Human Resource & Social Development Canada website at: http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/publications_resources/social_policy/mac_report/page00.shtml.

to meet the needs of the child care sector in the region. Additionally, after completion of training, many graduates will decide not to enter the field as front line workers.

- **Support for Children with Special Needs Compromised** – With low wages and the high cost and time commitment to training, the number of qualified providers of care to children with support and special needs is minimal in the community. Attracting people to this field is difficult as outlined in the interviews with Camosun College, Supported Child Development and Military Family Resource Centre.
- **Competition between Centres for Staffing** – Due to the lack of qualified ECE trained care providers in the community, some facilities will attract staff to leave one centre to join employment at their centre by offering a higher wage or better benefit packages. This situation is common in the ECE field.
- “Poaching” staff from one centre to work at another by offering a higher wage or better benefits is common in the community as noted in the interviews with Gillian Bryan and Meagan Brame.

3.4 Recommendations

From our interviews it is apparent that there is no tracking of staff retention of front line workers and/or recruitment of those who graduate from any formal training in the ECE field. Two approaches could be considered to provide the region with a better picture of the number of trained staff working in the field.

1. It may be possible to have a survey go out to all child care facilities to determine:
 - Number of staff and qualifications; date of certification;
 - Number of staff presently upgrading from ECE certificate to ECE diploma (full time or part time);
 - Availability of pertinent training opportunities that are affordable and accessible;
 - Number of child care spaces they are licensed for; number of those licensed spaces they utilize
 - Wages of staff according to position, training and experience
 - If they have a back-up staff list; do they have qualified staff to work with children requiring extra support?
2. Another way to gather this information could be a follow up call or email to ECE graduates 6 months to one year after graduation asking them about their career choices, employment history, and if they have future plans for continued studies. This would give us a picture of the number of ECE certified people actually working in the field.

The local colleges can give us a number of students attending the certificate and diploma courses each year and the number of graduates but they are unable to keep track of what the students do once they complete their studies.

3. In Enid Elliot’s 2006 report on child care in the region, employment barriers to early childhood educators coming from out of the province or country are identified and recommendations are made. These recommendations should be revisited.

4.0 Child Care Spaces

As the number of women entering the workforce increases, the demand for non-parental child care options for their children also increases. Statistics Canada¹⁰ reported that in 2004, “73% of all women with children under age 16 living at home were part of the employed workforce, up from 39% in 1976” (p. 105). The same report indicated a significant increase in the number of licensed child care spaces in Canada: “By 2003, there were almost 750,000 licensed child care spaces in Canada, 59% more than in 1998. The current figure is also twice that in the early 1990s and close to seven times greater than that in 1980” (p. 108). Despite such dramatic increases, the creation of child care spaces appears not to have kept up with the demand as all interviewed stakeholders noted a lack of child care spaces (for typically- and atypically-developing children).

In 2005, the Capital Region was home to 17,083 children aged five and under.¹¹ Current 2007 data on regulated child care spaces indicate that child care facilities in the region have a capacity of 5,377 regulated spaces at any given time.¹² While it is difficult to precisely estimate the shortage of child care spaces due to the complexity of assessing supply and demand for care, the gap between the numbers of young children and spaces is visibly significant. If we assumed that 70% of children under 5 required child care, and that they were provided with regulated care¹³, 11,958 children would be in need of a regulated child care space for some duration of the work week. Even if some of the 5,377 spaces provided care to more than one child, the shortfall is still wide. Additionally, the geographic distribution of regulated spaces in our region varies greatly, and is concentrated in the municipalities of Victoria and Saanich, with less concentration in the municipalities where demand is growing. For example, in the Western Communities there are approximately 1,060 regulated spaces for a population of 3,500 children under 5, and on Salt Spring and the Southern Gulf Islands, there are approximately 128 regulated child care spaces for approximately 600 children under 5.

The January 2007 VIHA list of licensed child care facilities shows 32 licensed spaces in Sooke for children under the age of three in licensed infant/toddler child care. In addition, there were 11 licensed FCC facilities listed and they provide 33 spaces for children under the age of 36 months, with a maximum of 11 infant spaces within those 33. These numbers represent an increase of 15 licensed spaces for children under the age of three in the Sooke area since the spring of 2006. There are also 7 registered LNRs in that region and unless these providers report on the number and ages of children in their care, this information is not available.

4.1 Types of Child Care

There are various types of child care provided by regulated child care providers. These are family child care (FCC), Group Child Care (GCC), Preschools and License-

¹⁰ Statistics Canada. (2006). Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report (Fifth Edition). <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-503-XIE/0010589-503-XIE.pdf>.

¹¹ Vancouver Island Early Childhood Services Committee. (2006). The Early Years on Vancouver Island: Building Together. Ministry of Children and Family Development, Vancouver Island Health Authority, Vancouver Island School Districts, 4.

¹² Vancouver Island Health Authority Community Care Facilities Licensing Program. March 2007.

¹³ Quality and regulated child care is the standard that those in the child care field advocate for. Refer to Elliot, 2006 for further discussion.

Not-Required (LNR). Descriptions of each type of care can be found below. From data provided by VIHA Community Care Licensing, there were a total of 5,377 regulated child care spaces in the Capital Region at the end of March 2007.¹⁴ The greatest number of spaces is provided by group child care, followed by family child care and pre-schools.

Table 4.1 Number of Child Care Spaces by Type of Facility

Name of Centre	# of Programs	# of Spaces
Family Child Care	236	1647
Group Child Care	82	2333
Pre-Schools	55	1309
License-Not-Required	44	88
Total	417	5377

Source: VIHA Community Care Licensing, March 28, 2007

Family Child Care (FCC)

The Licensee of a Family Child Care (FCC) facility is regulated to care for no more than 7 children (including their own children). Of these 7 children, no more than 5 are preschool age, and of those 5, no more than 3 can be under the age of 36 months and of those 3, no more than 1 can be under the age of 12 months. This makes the availability of child care spaces for infants minimal. Most FCC Licensees work alone and are open for a significant number of hours during the day. Due to the cost of running the program from their home, many are unable to hire an assistant to work with them. Because of the lack of staff available to sub, the care provider most often is unable to attend to personal appointments or training opportunities. These factors contribute to the isolation of family child care providers and the high number that eventually close their business. Parents are often required to pay for the care provider's holidays and sick days, and this adds to the stress faced by working parents trying to find alternate care for their children. Licensing does not require licensees to attend classes but does require applicants to meet the minimum requirements of the Child Care Licensing Regulation regarding training and experience, prior to becoming licensed. This may require the applicant to seek additional training or experience before a license can be issued.

Each Municipality has Zoning Regulations as to the number of child spaces that can be licensed in each area. In the Municipality of Victoria, a Zoning Bylaw states that a FCC can only be licensed for a maximum of 5 children whereas the other Municipalities in the Greater Victoria Region are able to have a maximum of 7 licensed spaces. As of March 28th, 2007, the latest list of licensed spaces obtained from VIHA, shows that there were 233 licensed FCC facilities. Of these 233 facilities, all were licensed for 7 child care

¹⁴ The Ministry of Children and Family Development also maintains a listing of licensed child care providers.¹⁴ The website is accessible to all with internet service and lists only the name, location, number of licensed spaces, but not vacancies for operators that choose to be included. Ministry of Children and Family child care listings can be found at: <http://childcareinfo.gov.bc.ca/childcaresearch/search.aspx>.

spaces except for 3 licensed for a maximum of 5 children (one in Esquimalt, one in Saanich and one in View Royal – it is unclear if the number of 5 spaces was set by Licensing) and one in Colwood had 8 licensed child care spaces. This makes a total of 1,626 child care spaces (for children aged birth to 12 years of age) of which only 233 spaces could be licensed for infants under the age of 12 months and a total of 699 spaces for children under the age of 36 months and a maximum of 1,165 for preschool aged children. Information received from VIHA shows all FCC in the Municipality of Victoria to be licensed for a maximum capacity of 7 child care spaces and this contradicts the Zoning Bylaw mentioned above. We await information from Victoria on any efforts to align the city's capacity levels with those of the province.

Group Child Care

Group Child Care licenses provide for an increased number of spaces. An Infant/Toddler Group Care License allows the centre to have a group of not more than 12 children and the centre may have up to 5 groups of 12 for a total capacity of 60 infants/toddlers. One infant and toddler educator is required for each group of 4 or fewer children. For each group of 5 to 8 children, staff must include one infant and toddler educator and one early childhood educator. With a group of 9 to 12 children, the minimal staffing requirements include one infant and toddler educator, one early childhood educator and one assistant. It is important to note that the Infant/Toddler Educator must always be working front line with any of the above staff:child ratios. This increases the demand for qualified I/T Educators. As of January 2007 the VIHA Licensing office lists 36 Infant/Toddler Licensed Group Programs operating in the Greater Victoria Region. These centres provide a combined total of 898 spaces for children from birth to 36 months. The Victoria CCRR referral data base shows that most have no vacancy, some indicate that they maintain a waitlist, and none provide information on the number of individuals on their waitlist.

A Licensed Group Day Care for children aged 30 months to school age can have a maximum of 2 children aged 30 to 36 months old within a group of not more than 25 children. The minimal regulated staff to children ratio is as follows: for each group of 8 or fewer children, one early childhood educator; for each group of 9-16 children, one early childhood educator and one assistant; and, for each group of 17 to 25 children, one early childhood educator and 2 assistants. There were 73 licensed Group Day Cares (re: 30 months to school age) in the Region as of January 2007. These centres provided a combined total of 2,570 child care spaces. To date, the number of vacancies among these spaces is unknown as is the number of centres that maintain waitlists.

Pre-schools

Each preschool group for children ages 30 months to school age includes no more than 20 children. Preschool centres provide services to children for no more than 4 hours per day,¹⁵ and typically offer 2- or 3-day programs. The staff to child ratio in a Preschool program is one early childhood educator for each group of 15 or fewer children; and, for each group of 16 to 20 children, one early childhood educator and one assistant. There were 66 Licensed Preschools listed with VIHA Licensing in January 2007. These programs provided a total of 1,762 spaces in our Region. Full-time

¹⁵ Child care centres for infants, toddlers, and 3- to 5-year-old children are allowed to care for children for a maximum of 13 hours per day.

working parents find the preschool model challenging as they typically require child care for more than 4 hours per day and for more than 2 or 3 days a week.

License-Not-Required

There are 27 License-Not-Required (LNR) programs registered with the Victoria CCRR and 17 with the Westshore/Sooke CCRR. A registered LNR can care for either: 2 children not related to them; or, one sibling group and children who are related to the care provider through blood or marriage. Thus, without a license, a care provider utilizing the latter option can possibly care for more than 7 children (e.g., one sibling group of 3 children, her own 3 children, and a niece and nephew = 8 children; there is no cap on the number of related children in one's home or on the size of the sibling group).

Unregulated Care

The number of children in the care of relatives or unregistered care providers is unknown. With the shortage of child care spaces within the License and registered License-Not-Required facilities, parents are often required to arrange care with a neighbor or relative. Often parents use several different care arrangements within a week to enable them to attend work as there is nothing available on a full-time basis.

4.2 Demand for Child Care

Information collated by the Victoria CCRR program provides an interesting summary of requests they receive for child care services in our region, **excluding** the Western Communities of Langford, Colwood, Sooke, Metchosin, and the Highlands. This information helps to provide a useful picture of child care demand through stats on the type and location of care that families are requesting. The tables below compare statistics assembled for the months of January and March for 2006 & 2007, demonstrating some striking increases in requests from families. The month of January is one of the busier months of the year for CCRR in terms of services provided to parents, while the month of March is more typical.

Table 4.2 Requests Made to CCRR for Various Ages of Children

Age of Child Care was Requested	January 2006	January 2007	March 2006	March 2007
Infant (new born to 12 mos.)	62	106	79	71
3 - 5 years	42	92	49	64
Toddler (13 months to 35 mos.)	42	83	45	52
School-aged	6	13	9	19

Source: Victoria CCRR, May 2007

As the figures in table 4.2 shows, there was a 100% increase in calls to CCRR in January 2007 for each age group of children who needed care. It also shows that the greatest demand for care in both years was for children under the age of 5, particularly infants.

Table 4.3 Requests Made for Type of Care Preferred

Type of Care Preferred	January 2006	January 2007	March 2006	March 2007
All types	121	208	123	151
FCC	12	34	24	15
LNR	3	23	14	14
GDC	9	15	16	14
Preschool	3	11	2	6
Out of School	2	5	2	3

Source: Victoria CCRR, May 2007

Once again, we see a significant increase in the months of January, above 100%, in each type of category of care: family child care (FCC), license-not-required (LNR), group day care (GDC) and preschools.¹⁶ Callers showed a preference for family child care, with license-not-required showing a marked increase in preference from January calls in 2006 to 2007.

Table 4.4 Preference for Location of Child Care

Preference for Location of Care	January 2006	January 2007	March 2007	March 2007
Proximity to Work, Home or School				
Home	114	217	126	156
Work	17	83	25	41
School	5	14	6	4
Other	8	29	13	21
Municipality of Choice				
Victoria	63	137	70	81
Saanich E.	26	120	47	66
Saanich W.	40	89	36	43
Esquimalt/Vic West	19	75	21	44
Oak Bay	12	51	7	18
View Royal	11	49	18	21
Central Saanich	4	23	13	15
North Saanich	2	17	1	9
Sidney	5	17	6	8
Gulf Islands	3	0	0	0

Source: Victoria CCRR, May 2007

Table 4.4 above shows a high level of consistency preference families have for where their child care is located. These figures show that child care located close to home is by far the most desired location, with child care located close to work following second. Demand for child care is greatest for the municipalities of Victoria and Saanich (however, these figures do not include calls from families needing care in the Western Communities).

4.3 Cost to Provide Child Care Spaces

The creation of child care spaces is an intensive process; there is a considerable initial investment of time (to complete all aspects of the application process and to wait for responses from the usually busy licensing office) and capital to meet the minimum requirements of the Community Care and Assisted Living Act and the Child Care Licensing Regulation and to secure the potential to generate revenue to offset future expenses (e.g., salaries, insurance, etc.). Below are some example costs a family child care centre wanting to open would incur. There are many additional costs that would also have to be considered, and the expenses would vary depending on the type of centre, location, and the number of staff and children.

Table 4.5 Example Start Up Costs for Family Child Care Centre

Example Start Up Costs for Family Child Care Centre	Cost
Criminal Record Check for all adults living in the home	\$20 for each adult
First Aid Course	\$85
Doctor's Note to verify applicant's physical and emotional wellness to care for children	\$75
Standard introductory course on starting a family child care centre	\$100 - \$315
Business License	\$100 paid annually
Liability Insurance	\$200
Rent or Mortgages	varies
Toys and Equipment	varies
Modifications to home to meet licensing standards (gates, fencing, railings, soft ground cover for outdoor play)	Varies & can become prohibitive

The cost to create a centre can be prohibitive to many who may desire to operate their own centres. In addition, the on-going operational costs have already placed such a significant burden on some centres that they have had to close.

4.4 Child Care Referral & Support

Throughout BC, CCRR's play an important role in communities to provide services to both parents, as well as child care providers. In the Capital Region, there are three CCRR locations: Victoria, Sooke and Westshore. Some of the basic services include: free referrals to child care spaces and other community programs/services for parents; assistance with subsidy applications for parents; workshops and training opportunities for care providers; maintenance of an updated database of all licensed and registered LNR care providers; provision of resources including books, videos, infant equipment, theme toy and learning boxes; registration of LNRs; and telephone or home support from child care consultant (eg. business, human resources, conflict resolution etc.). CCRR staff provide suggestions and options to parents and care providers, but does not offer recommendations.

Parents can obtain a printed listing of all licensed child care spaces directly from the office of VIHA Community Care Facilities Licensing Program Office. They can also access the MCFD website listings of licensed child care spaces. VIHA and MCFD listings do not provide the parent with any information other than the name and type of child care facility together with location and phone number. The CCRR staff is able to give the parent a more detailed description of the child care facility, such as programming, transportation options, hours of operation, education of the care providers. Other child care related service providers may also provide support to child care providers, and also maintain their own listings of suitable care arrangements, such as the Cridge Respite Resource Service and Supported Child Development.

Table 4.6 Statistics on People Served by Victoria CCRR Services

Statistics on Victoria CCRR Services	2006 (January Only)	2007 (January Only)
Total Number of Individuals Served for one Month	253	468
Total # of Inquiries from Parents for one Month	148	292
Total # of People Requesting Subsidies for one Month	n/a	36
Source of Subsidy Request:		
Office Visit/Question & Pick up	n/a	23
Guarantor	n/a	13

Source: Victoria CCRR March 2007

Table 4.6 provides a summary of enquiries received by the Victoria CCRR during January 2006 and January 2007. Note that there was almost a 100% increase in the number of referrals recorded for January 2007 as compared to January 2006. The Victoria CCRR began assisting parents with subsidy applications after January 2006. Victoria CCRR presently assists parents with the completion of the subsidy application. Part of this process requires the CCRR staff person to act as “Guarantor” by viewing the parent’s picture identification and proof of birth for the child and then photocopying these items. The staff members then sign the application guaranteeing that the photocopies are true copies of the original pieces of identification. Recently, the need for a Guarantor has been eliminated from the application process. It is too soon to obtain stats from the local CCRR programs if the number of requests for assistance with their subsidy application will reduce.

4.4 Community Impacts Created by a Shortage of Child Care Spaces

The shortage of affordable, accessible and quality child care spaces is having its impact on child care service providers and families in the region.

- **No Vacancies-** With a minimum number of 5,377 license child care spaces in the Greater Victoria Region and 88 spaces with the registered LNRs, the local CCRRs continue to find it difficult to help parents locate a vacancy to suit the parent and child’s needs. Parents often make more than one request to the

CCRR for names of care providers and many wait a long time before finding an opening, and in some cases, they never do find care.

- **Long Wait Lists-** The numbers of children on wait lists for child care is not tracked for the region. Many child care operators and parents have indicated that there are long wait lists and that some centres have stopped taking any reservations from parents. One example of waitlist information is provided by the manager of the University of Victoria Child Care Centre. On February 26, 2007, there were 69 children on the infant waitlist (i.e., 0 – 18 months of age; there are 10 infant spaces); 121 children on the toddler waitlist (i.e., 18 months – 3 years of age; there are 20 toddler spaces); and, 60 children on the waitlist for the program for 3- to 5-year-olds (there are 58 spaces for this age group).
- **Limited or No Choices for Parents**¹⁷- Due to the lack of spaces, families are left scrambling for what ever care is available, and hopeful that the care is of an acceptable quality, accessible by their mode of transportation, and affordable. Long-time employees of the Victoria CCRR note that between 1999 and 2005 they were able to provide a number of child care options for parents. In addition, they were able to spend a considerable amount of time with parents to discuss child care screening tools. During this time period, 10 to 15 referrals were sufficient for the parent to successfully secure a placement for his or her child (i.e., vacancy, location, hours of operation, and type of program matched the needs of the child and family). In 2006 and 2007, parent satisfaction rests on finding any vacancy regardless of area, service type, or hours of operation.

Many families have specific needs due to the nature of their employment. The Victoria CCRR currently has a listing of 92 child care facilities willing to provide care on a “drop-in” basis. These numbers do not guarantee an available space. They also have 40 listings for “temporary” care, and again, cannot guarantee that when a parent contacts any of these 40 care providers, that they will actually have an available space. When reviewing their data base, Victoria CCRR notes that there are 6 facilities that list they are available for “over night” care and 14 centres note that they are willing to care for children in the evenings. These are again, not guaranteed available spaces. When we contacted Mary Jane at the VIHA Community Care Facilities Licensing Program office, she advised us that there are 2 or 3 centres in town that have the appropriate license to allow for “over night” care. The licensing requirement for over night care requires special inspections and fire approvals.

With the presence of the naval base in the region, there are specific needs for care found in the military community. The child care needs of newly-stationed families poses a challenge for the MFRC because the needs of these families are typically immediate, while the rate of availability of spaces is slow, and the number of newly-created spaces is almost negligible. While the MFRC has funding to provide 72 hours of emergency child care for families, the above-mentioned problems have forced it to contract these services to nanny agencies. It is also being documented by parents and child care centres that due to the lack of options for child care, some parents have been forced to quit

¹⁷ Refer to Enid Elliot's report on pages 1 and 2 for other examples of impacts to actual families (www.playvictoria.org).

their jobs, move out of the region and recruit grandparents or other family who live outside the region to provide care.

In a letter to the Editor of the Times-Colonist in January 2006, Enid Elliot wrote that: "Parents in our region have little choice when they look for care for their children. Figures from last spring suggest that there were fewer than 50 licensed spaces for children under three in the Sooke region, while more than 150 babies had been born in the past year and 3,500 new homes were due to come on the market."

- **Local Impacts on Employers and Job Seekers-** The inability to find child care is recognized as:
 - a barrier to employment,
 - contributing to work absenteeism,
 - a reason parent-employees will leave the work force or not take jobs,
 - a barrier to immigrant families, particularly for those with multiple children, and immigrant women seeking employment.

- **Maintaining Current and Accurate Statistics Challenging-** One of the most significant barriers to preparing accurate information on child care spaces is the availability of data and the systems used to track and maintain information. While agencies do keep important data and statistics, systems are not in place to store data and pull it out for long term monitoring and statistical analysis. For example, there is no database that can easily pull out the number of child care space openings and closures for each year to track the net gain or loss of spaces over time. Neither are the numbers of child care spaces each year readily available so there could be any statistical analysis of child care spaces to changes in child population over time. Additionally, although referral consultants, such as the CCRRs, update their database about twice a year, vacancy information can quickly become outdated unless operators make an effort to provide this information more regularly.

Additionally, once interviews with stakeholders were completed, we discovered that no program or service provider kept track of the number of children's names that were placed on wait lists for child care spaces, and if the child's name was on more than one wait list. It was also unclear as to how many children's names on such wait lists ever secure a space in that centre and if so, how long were they on the wait list? The number of names on waitlists would be information that only care providers could report and even with the numbers, it would be difficult without collecting the names on the lists to know how many children are on multiple waitlists.

- **Children in Unregulated Care-** The staff at Victoria CCRR are informed by parents that when child care vacancies in licensed and regulated LNR facilities are lacking, their child care options are reduced and they are compelled to leave the workforce, abandon educational opportunities, or place their children in unregulated child care settings. The nature of these latter types of child care opportunities makes it difficult, if not impossible, to assess the quality of the program, and this makes parents nervous. Licensing and regulatory bodies impose standards that are likely to maintain or improve the quality of a child care

program. Such standards are less likely to be met by unregulated programs.¹⁸ Children's stress as measured by cortisol level has been reported to be higher in poor quality programs than in better quality programs.¹⁹

4.5 Recommendations

It is undisputed that there is a shortage of child care spaces to meet the demand for care of families in the Capital Region. Yet, there is considerable difficulty in accurately assessing the situation at the local level given the challenges of acquiring and maintaining local data and statistics on child care. Some solutions to address this crisis could be:

- Community programs and services work collaboratively with child care providers to discuss what information could be collected to monitor key indicators of change, such as child care spaces, waitlists, and # of vacancies. Identifying how this information is going to be stored, used for monitoring, and applied to the creation of future child care spaces, and who would take on these responsibilities should also be decided.
- In relation to municipal governance and planning, it is recommended that:
 - the child care community, VIHA and municipalities work together to identify opportunities to create new spaces, while also addressing how local regulations and by-laws enable or deter the creation of child care spaces.
 - resources be provide to educate the general public, planners and councilors about the community impacts of the child care crisis.
- Identify the real costs to create and maintain new spaces.

5.0 Funding

It was apparent throughout all the interviews that the instability of funding affected the programs and services in many ways. Without a continuum of guaranteed funding the programs and service agencies are unable to plan for more than the term of the funding agreement. This means that one time funding or term funding for one year only allows for short term goals to be set and the inability to guarantee staff long term employment. Many programs rely on continual proposal writing in hopes of securing one time funds or a funding source for future projects. With grants and incentives being offered with very short turn around time for the application or proposal to be submitted, added stress is placed on the applicant.

¹⁸ Doherty, G., Friendly, M., & Beach, J. (2003). *OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care: Canadian Background Report*. Available at: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/sdc/socpol/publications/reports/2004-002623/english.pdf>

¹⁹ Sims, M., Guilfoyle, A., & Parry, T. (2005). What cortisol levels tell us about quality in childcare centres. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 30, 29-39. Also available at: <http://www.ecu.edu.au/ses/iccs/cware/cfs/pdf/cortisol.pdf>.

5.1 Overview of Child Care Funding

Federal

Funding for child care programs and related services has not been stable in Victoria, similar to the experience of many other communities in BC. The Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Agreement between the BC government and the Federal Liberal government was cancelled when the Conservative government took office in 2006. The federal government replaced the agreement with the Universal Child Care Benefit: "A new form of direct financial assistance that provides parents with resources to support the child care choices that help them balance work and family as they see fit. The Universal Child Care Benefit is paid to parents in monthly installments of \$100 per month per child under the age of six."²⁰ This Universal Child Care Benefit is a taxable benefit.

The federal government recently revised its plan to provide incentives to create 25,000 flexible child care spaces per year through the Child Care Spaces Initiative. The \$250 million budgeted for this initiative will instead be given directly to provinces beginning in 2007-2008.²¹ No plans have been announced as to how this money will be used.

Provincial

The accountability for funding, licensing, and monitoring child care in the province of BC mainly resides with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and the Ministry of Health. Below is an overview of the provincial responsibilities for child care and early learning.

MCFD oversees the administration and funding of the following:

- Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) - is a monthly grant provided to child care facilities based on the number of children enrolled. The BC government did not assume financial responsibility for most programs that benefited from the initial ELCC agreement with the Federal Government.²² Instead they opted to reduce the Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) for all operators and placed a cap on the number of new applicants to the program. This cap was removed in May 2007 and applications will now be accepted. Appendix C provides the latest CCOF rates for operators.
- Child Care Resource and Referral Programs- As mentioned in section 4.4, CCRRs are a public body providing local services to parents and care providers throughout the province. In May 2007, the BC government drastically reduced funding for the services provided by CCRR.
- Child Care Subsidy- Parents who have a household income of \$38,000.00 or less are eligible for assistance with the cost of child care through the subsidy program. Upon completion and submitting the Subsidy Application, the parent will be advised as to the amount of subsidy they will be eligible for. These sums

²⁰ Refer to: <http://www.universalchildcare.ca/en/home.shtml>

²¹ The Honourable James M. Flaherty, Minister of Finance. The Budget Speech. Monday, March 19, 2007. Available at: <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2007/speech/speeche.html>.

²² Subsidy rates and funding for the Supported Child Development Programs in BC were not reduced to pre-ELCC levels.

differ depending on the type of child care program their child is registered with and if the care provider has a License or is a Registered LNR. Lower rates of subsidy are provided for in-home care and unregistered LNR care.²³

- Major Capital Funding- provided a 50% contribution made by the Province to a maximum of \$300,000, for the creation of licensed group child care spaces. However, this funding is currently unavailable pending clarity regarding the new federal spaces initiative.
- Minor Capital Funding- These funds help licensed group child care providers maintain quality services for families in their communities. Under this program, child care facilities may receive funding to help them meet provincial licensing requirements related to upgrading or repairing existing facilities, replacing equipment and furnishings or assisting with moving costs. Minor Capital Funding applications are being received and reviewed on a continual basis.
- Supported Child Development Program- is for children who require extra support to be included in a child care setting because they have a developmental delay or disability in physical, cognitive, communicative or social/emotional/behavioural areas. SCDP is a family-centre child development program, based in the community, and reflective and responsive to community diversity. Families participate on a voluntary basis. This program is wholly funded by the MCFD, Early Child Development Services, and administered by the Child and Family Rehabilitation Services (CFRS) within the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA).
- Early Childhood Educator Registry- MCFD maintains this registry.

Ministry of Health

This Ministry is responsible for the development and implementation of legislation, policy and guidelines to protect the health and safety of people being cared for in licensed facilities, which includes child care. The program is administered at the local level through the local health authorities.

Ministry of Education

The BC government has committed new early learning funding (\$1.4 million) to the Ministry of Education through the 3 programs: StrongStart, Early Learning Grants and Ready, Set, Learn. See Appendix D for descriptions of these initiatives.

The Ministry of Education is developing an early learning framework for young children. This framework will set out a vision, principles, and key areas of learning for young children in British Columbia. The Ministry recently requested public feedback on the B.C. Early Learning Framework draft. The opportunity to respond on the draft framework is now closed. The Ministry is currently in the process of revising the framework based on the feedback received from British Columbians.²⁴

²³ See http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/app_process.htm for more information on qualifications for subsidy and subsidy rates.

²⁴ http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/early_learning/

Overview

Since the cancellation of the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (signed in 2005 between the Federal and Provincial government), there has been an instability in funding to program and services. Table 5.1 below provides an overview of changes in funding in 2007.

Table 5.1 Overview of Funding to Child Care

Funding	Source	Funding Changes
Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF)	MCFD	<p>Funding for the Child Care Operating Program will revert back to pre-ELCC levels on July 1st. The average rate roll-back will be about \$2 per enrolled child per day or about \$40 per month.</p> <p>Implementation of a program intake cap after January 5th, 2007 for new application for funding was lifted in May, 2007 with new applications being accepted.</p> <p>A <u>one time</u> disbursement of \$20 million was paid out to qualified providers in March 2007. These payments were based on the number of funded licensed spaces per provider and type of care provided.</p> <p>Existing applicants will have the COOF amounts reduced effective July 1st, 2007. see Appendix C for outline of reductions</p>
Child Care Subsidy	MCFD	The province will maintain the \$126 million per year provincial subsidy program and recent enhancements that supports about 25,000 children in low and middle income families
Universal Child Benefit	Federal Funds	Ottawa's Universal Child Benefit which is providing \$100 per child every month to parents for children under the age of 6.
CCRR	MCFD	The provincial CCRR budget of \$15 million was reduced effective May 1 st , 2007 to \$9 million.
Supported Child Development	MCFD	This provincial program will continue to disperse \$54 million annually.
Minor Capital Funding for Emergency Repair, Replacement and Relocation	MCFD	Applications are reviewed on an ongoing basis.
Major Capital Funding for Creation of New Child Care Spaces	MCFD	Major Capital Funding Program is not currently accepting applications pending clarity regarding the new federal spaces initiative.

The Child Care Advocacy Forum recently released a document that questions or provides additional information on the recent changes to child care programs and services taken by the provincial government:²⁵

5.2 Community Impacts of Funding Arrangements and Cuts

CCOF

As shown in Appendix C, the amounts of CCOF funding will be reduced effective July 1, 2007. While Linda Reid indicates that cuts to the CCOF will result in the average loss of \$40 per month per child, the Child Care Advocacy Forum reports that this is true for group care for 3 – 5 year old children. For infant and toddler care, the average loss is \$80 per month per child.

In the Capital Region of BC, the local implications from the reduction in this funding have included:

- With the cap on new CCOF applications, prospective child care owners/operators contemplating opening a new facility will not be able to incorporate this funding into their operating costs, thereby it acts as a disincentive to the creation of new facilities and child care spaces.
- A challenging and ethical dilemma is created for child care providers with the reduction in funding. Most child care centres have been using these funds to offset their expenses, and now are placed in a situation where they must choose either to reduce the services they are providing, reduce the staff wages or increase fees to parents.
- Increase of child care fees charged to parents could amount to an increase ranging from \$50 to \$150 per child care space.

Documentation on how individual centres apply this funding in their program is not publicly recorded; therefore it is difficult to assess the impact of the reduction of CCOF funding and how it will impact on individual centres in our region without directly inquiring with them. There is considerable exchange of information during meetings, forums and casual conversations that validate the impacts of the cuts to CCOF on child care operators, however, more time is required to implement a more organized and thorough documentation of these impacts.

Funding to CCRRs

Victoria CCRR staff numbers have been reduced effective May 1st, 2007 from 6 to 3 full time equivalence due to the funding cutbacks. These staff reductions increase the workloads of the existing staff, while demand for services is increasing. Some examples of the impacts are:

- As a store front location for parents to access assistance with the application process for subsidy, it is reported that in March 2006, they had 5 office visits from parents requesting assistance compared to 44 in March 2007. It is

²⁵ Child Care Advocacy Forum. For the record – Child care in BC: What they say – What they don't say. March 2007. Available at: http://www.advocacyforum.bc.ca/pdf/AdvoForum_WhatTheyDontSay.pdf.

possible that the increase in the number of parents accessing assistance from the Victoria CCRR could be due to a move to a more user friendly location in late December 2006.

- There is one full time staff child care consultant who will maintain services to be provided to all registered Licensed and LNR's that were previously staffed by 4 full time employees.
- Training and workshop opportunities will be reduced due to the reprioritizing of staff hours. CCRR's are unable to maintain the previous level of services with the reduction of funding for staff.
- Child care providers, parents, ECE students, researchers and others who support children and families in all BC communities are losing a comprehensive range of resources and services that enhance their ability to provide quality care for BC's youngest citizens.
- The Westcoast Child Care Resource & Referral program has also lost all of it's provincial funding. Westcoast is no longer funded by MCFD to respond to inquiries outside the City of Vancouver. Inquiries from outside of Vancouver will be referred to the caller's local CCRR or to MCFD for support.

Capping of the Major Capital Funding

The BC government states that "since 2005, we have invested over \$14 million to build almost 1,500 new government funded licensed child care spaces across BC," when in fact most communities had to raise at least 50% of the capital costs for these new spaces from other sources. Furthermore, BC does not report that "for every 10 licensed family and centre-based programs that opened, 9 closed within 4 years".

Opening child care facilities requires capital costs, sometimes, considerable costs (e.g. seismic upgrading and other emergency and safety requirements). The interim capping of the Major Capital Funding grant may have an adverse effect on someone who is currently contemplating starting a new child care program as there will be no source for capital funds available specifically for child care centres, leaving interested applicants to obtain loans through financial institutions like banks. With the small financial margin that child care centres operate with, some existing centres are making tough choices whether they can afford to stay open, others have closed their doors.

Child Care Subsidies

Applying for child care subsidy can present many challenges to parents. The process itself is quite involved and can be challenging for parents to complete without assistance. Additionally, subsidy has its limits. As one parent has determined, the subsidy will only provide support for up to 20 days per month, while the number of days at work, hence the number of days when there is a need for child care, might exceed this cut off.

Inequities between Communities are Widened

The lack of funding to provide child care opportunities will continue to widen the gap between programs that can or cannot access parent fees. For example, it is unclear how the shortfall in funding to the Blanshard Community Centre will be addressed as the community it serves cannot afford any additional costs associated with child care. This will surely jeopardize the availability of child care programs for this community and the ability of this community to achieve or maintain economic stability. For other centres, the burden of additional child care costs will most likely be transferred in part, or in whole to parents. These child care programs will grow to become available for only a select group of parents and their children. Enid Elliot's child care report also identifies the variability in child care fees charged between neighbourhoods (see page 39).

Public Funding for Training and Education

Without adequate funds to run programs at community colleges and universities to graduate a sufficient supply of ECE trained professionals who will remain in the Capital Region and take jobs in the ECE field, the inability to meet the staffing requirements of child care centres will persist, and the shortage in child care spaces will remain. From the stakeholder interviews, it is documented that:

- As of March 30th, 2007, there were only 4 qualified staff available remaining on the Victoria CCRR substitute list to provide substitute services at early childhood centres and family child care facilities throughout the area Victoria CCRR serves.
- Blanshard Community Centre closed their pre-school due to an inability to find qualified staff.
- Child care staff feel a burden to work overtime, not take holiday or sick leave for risk of reducing child: adult ratios which would require a centre to close if the ratio was too high.
- Centres are forced to compete with one another for available trained ECEs.
- Due to funding fluctuations to Camosun College, they are unable to consistently run second year courses that lead to specialized certificates to work with children with special needs, and infant/toddlers.

6.0 Local Strategies

During the interviews with stakeholders, several initiatives were shared that were being implemented in an effort to address the child care issues shared throughout this report. Examples are noted below.

- In an effort to support and maintain interest in pursuing further early childhood education, some of the proceeds of Enid Elliot's book, *"We're Not Robots": The Voices of Daycare Providers*,²⁶ will be used to provide a student award to a graduate of the infant/toddler course at Camosun College. The first award will be awarded to a successful candidate in May or June 2007.

²⁶ Elliot, Enid. (2006). *We're not Robots: The Voices of Daycare Providers*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

- Kim Ainsworth, Vancouver Island Co-Op Preschool Association²⁷ Chairperson, announced at a Licensing Committee Meeting on March 5, 2007 that this group wants to pilot new or modified co-op preschool programs. The traditional family has changed and it has become more difficult to attract families willing to assist in the co-op classroom on a regular basis. They have asked preschool members to submit proposals that enlist the employment of an ECE-qualified staff and an additional assistant so that only one parent volunteer is required to maintain adult: child ratios.
- As already discussed in section 5 on funding, the Supported Child Development Program developed their own strategy to address staffing concerns by raising wages of staff who work with children with special needs. The program has been working together with operators to develop and implement the Staffing, Wages and Training Plan to raise the ability of operators to attract and retain skilled staff, and to appropriately include children with a variety of developmental challenges.

8.0 Recommendations

During the debates of the Legislative Assembly held on Wednesday, February 14, 2007, the NDP candidate from the North Island, Clare Trevena, introduced the following comment and question,²⁸

I hope the Premier realizes that many families are holding down two or three jobs just to afford child care, if they can find a child care space. They're lucky to find a child care space. In 2004 only 13 percent of children who were eligible for child care were able to find a space. In the Minister of Children and Family Development's own constituency there's a four-year waiting list for child care. When is this government going to realize that there is a problem in child care?

We have described three areas of concern for the child care community.

- The **retention and recruitment of staff** is pivotal to the delivery of quality programs for children in our community. The lack of qualified individuals because of endemic low wages and previous reductions in training opportunities for potential employees have placed severe limitations on our community's ability to provide quality child care programs for children and to support the economic stability of working families.
- Equally important is the **availability of child care spaces for children**. The lack of spaces due to associated costs (e.g., to create and maintain the physical environment, to employ qualified individuals, to maintain other operating expenses, etc.) similarly restricts our community's commitment to children and families.
- Finally, it is clear that a significant proportion of our community's ability to deliver quality child care programs rests firmly with the **availability of funds**.

²⁷ VICPA supports 15 parent participation preschools on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. The association has been in existence since 1949 and advocates for high quality early childhood education for children and professional standards for adults who work with them. VICPA is affiliated with Parent Cooperative Preschools International (PCPI).

²⁸ Refer to (www.leg.bc.ca/hansard/38th3rd/H70214p.htm p. 5270):

In our research for this project, it became very evident that there is a large amount of community information, however, it is either not recorded or unavailable in an easy to retrieve format. If a goal of our community is to ensure long term stability and quality of care to young children within the Capital Region, the provision of evidence-based information that can successfully guide researchers and policy makers to identify, plan, and implement quality, accessible and affordable child care programs seems an important step toward developing a community strategy.

Some suggested next steps could include:

- Bringing the stakeholders interviewed in this report together to discuss the report, the community implications and to identify possible areas for action and collaboration.
- Collaboratively develop a plan to monitor important child care information on an annual or bi-annual basis. A survey could be created to obtain information from child care providers/centres in the region. Suggestions on the type of data have been made throughout this report, such as # of staff and their training backgrounds.
- Extend invitations to First Nations early childhood professionals and other key service providers and/or community members to participate in community discussions on child care and identify where opportunities to collaborate and support each other exist. This report includes the input from only one stakeholder from the First Nations communities in the region. For those interested in some additional background information on child care and First Nations in the region, refer to Darlene Sanderson and Angel Sampson's child care report included in Enid Elliot's report from 2006.²⁹
- Review municipal by-laws within municipalities to better understand the barriers and opportunities to the creation and provisioning of child care.

PLAY has committed to undertaking some responsibilities in the upcoming months. First, the Understanding the Early Years project will continue with their work to assist with data collection and analysis of available child care information. It is hoped that the project will be able to estimate the numbers of spaces needed in each of the municipalities in the Capital Region. Research briefs on child care will be prepared and disseminated to each municipal councilor and planner in the region. This information will assist with a valuable contribution PLAY has committed to this summer to prepare a business plan focused on child care.

²⁹ Visit the PLAY website to review this document: www.playvictoria.org.

Appendix A

List of Child Care Stakeholders Requested for Interview

Completed

- *Liz Bloomfield*, Executive Director, Single Parent Resource Centre of Victoria
- *Scott Branch*, Children's Services Coordinator, Military Family Resource Centre
- *Gillian Bryan*, Outreach Worker, Community Access Program, Blanshard Community Centre
- *Mimi Davis*, Coordinator, Respite Services, The Cridge Centre for the Family
- *Enid Elliott*, Chair, Regional Child Care Council of Greater Victoria
- *Shelly Harnadek*, Supervisor, Community Care Facilities Licensing, Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA)
- *Jack Lalonde*, Manager, University of Victoria Child Care Services
- *Linda Leone*, Program Leader, Early Childhood Care and Education, Camosun College
- *Sherry-Lynn Lidemark*, Manager, Victoria West Community Y, YMCA-YWCA of Greater Victoria
- *Nicky Logins*, Supervisor, Children and Family Services, Sooke Westshore Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR), Sooke Family Resource Society
- *Belinda Macey*, Program Coordinator, Victoria Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR), Single Parent Resource Centre of Greater Victoria
- *MaryLynne Rimer*, Principal, Wave Consulting Ltd.
- *Angel Sampson*, Preschool Teacher, Manager, Songhees First Nation Early Childhood Centre
- *James Vitti*, Program Coordinator, Supported Child Development Program, Vancouver Island Health Authority
- *Loreli Urquhart*, President, Southern Vancouver Island Family Child Care Association
- *Dianne Girard*, Director, Sprott~Shaw Community College. Dianne was not interviewed but was consulted on the information included on their ECE program.

We were unable to arrange interviews with the following groups or individuals:

- Spoonful of Sugar Nanny Agency;
- Steve Meikle, Saanich Parks and Recreation;
- Kim Ainsworth, Vancouver Island Cooperative Preschool Association;
- Lucy Ann Smith, ROSCO (Regional Out-of-School Care Operators) Chairperson;
- Representative from the Maria Montessori program;
- Betty Hutchinson, local Chairperson for ECEBC.

Appendix B

Interview Guide used to undertake the stakeholder interviews.

Name: _____
Position: _____
Organization/Program: _____
Website: _____
Start Date: _____
Mandate: _____

Service
Provided: _____

Collection of
Data/Stats: _____

Challenges/Barriers: _____

Partners/Affiliated
organizations: _____

View on present child care options in Victoria:

Obstacles/challenges/barriers for Parents:

Obstacles/challenges/barriers for care providers:

Suggestions for solutions:

Appendix C

Child Care Operating Program Funding Rates for up to June 30, 2007		
Group Child Care Providers:		
Rate Category	4 hours or less	More than 4 hours
0 to 35 months	\$7.02	\$14.04
3 years to kindergarten	\$3.74	\$7.48
Grade 1 to 12 years	\$1.40	\$2.80
Preschool	\$1.87	\$1.87
Family Child Care Providers:		
Rate Category	4 hours or less	More than 4 hours
0 to 35 months	\$2.17	\$4.34
3 years to kindergarten	\$1.93	\$3.86
Grade 1 to 12 years	\$0.73	\$1.46
Child Care Operating Program Funding Rates for July 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008		
Group Child Care Providers:		
Rate Category	4 hours or less	More than 4 hours
0 to 35 months	\$6.00	\$12.00
3 years to kindergarten	\$2.74	\$5.48
Grade 1 to 12 years	\$1.40	\$2.80
Preschool	\$1.37	\$1.37
Family Child Care Providers:		
Rate Category	4 hours or less	More than 4 hours
0 to 35 months	\$1.85	\$3.70
3 years to kindergarten	\$1.41	\$2.82
Grade 1 to 12 years	\$0.73	\$1.46

Source: Ministry of Children and Family Development,
<http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/operating.htm>

Appendix D

Overview of Early Learning programs of the Ministry of Education

StrongStart pilot projects for 3- and 4-year-old children.³⁰ The program aims to provide school-based, high quality early learning programs for children younger than school age (program emphasis will be on 3 to 5 year olds but designed to accommodate families with children age 0-5) accompanied by a parent or caregiver, designed to support the success of students when they enter Kindergarten.³¹ Up to 4 Strong Start programs could be initiated in the Capital Region, at a school within each of the four school districts. These programs will be delivered by qualified early childhood educators.

Additionally new early learning money has also been provided to the Ministry of Education via the *Early Learning Grants*. The \$12 million program to enhance children's early learning will provide school districts with funds to allocate to early learning library materials for parents, caregivers and preschool aged children, preschool-appropriate play equipment for schools, supplies for early learning programs, and appropriate learning materials for early learning programs with an emphasis on Aboriginal culture. The grants will also allow for minor renovations to school district spaces needed to accommodate early learning activities, training for staff and volunteers, and further activities in school districts related to Ready, Set, Learn and other pre-literacy programs for young children.

Ready, Set, Learn is an existing kindergarten readiness program for three-year-olds and their parents and is offered in the Capital Region by the school districts. At a typical Ready, Set, Learn open house, a teacher reads a story to the children and parents or caregivers, and then each preschooler receives a kit that parents or caregivers use at home to stimulate early language development. In 2006, the program was offered in 1,071 schools in BC and served more than 17,000 soon-to-be students. Ready, Set, Learn can continue for a third year due to this new \$3.5-million investment.

³⁰ Ministry of Education. *Province Launches StrongStart Early Learning Centres*. December 14, 2006. Available at: http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2006EDU0131-001512.htm.

³¹ http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/strong_start.htm