

**BUILDING BLOCKS FOR CHILD CARE:  
THE CANADIAN DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION FOR EARLY LEARNING  
AND  
CHILD CARE SERVICE**

**Introduction**

Building Blocks for Child Care: The Canadian Development Association for Early Learning and Child Care Services (B2C2) responds to a critical need in a period of accelerated growth in early learning and child care programs. Such an association is necessary to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the new federal funding commitment of \$5 billion over 5 years and the resulting federal/provincial/territorial agreements.

In the agreements there is concurrence in principle to four QUAD principles: Quality, Universality, Accessibility and Developmental. There is also a commitment to share best practices and research findings. To date there is no public body in place to support best practice in child care development or operations.

The child care sector throughout Canada has been aptly described by the OECD as a “patchwork service”<sup>1</sup>. Existing programs are largely the result of community leadership and commitment, sometimes as a result of entrepreneurial efforts; far less often as a result of planned development by municipal, provincial or territorial governments.

Unlike the establishment of other Canadian social programs, the federal government has refused to direct its funding to non-profit expansion. This, coupled with the lack of infrastructure support, means community-based programs will face difficulty accessing the funding. As a result most new public money will find its way into the for-profit

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<sup>1</sup> OECD (2004) Early Childhood Education and Care Policy: Canada: Country Note, Paris:OECD

sector that is usually in a higher state of readiness because it does not engage in a community development process.

We have examples from other jurisdictions. In Australia, for example, large amounts of unrestricted public funds increased the service share of for-profit child care from 30% to 70% within a few years, resulting in broad concerns about pricing, quality and accessibility. The U.S. and Britain provide parallel examples.

Child care is a community asset. Where it is located, who it serves, how and when it operates should not be the decision of entrepreneurs. Conversely it cannot be left to the good will and resourcefulness of a handful of volunteers to develop community-based programs. The community child care sector requires a stable infrastructure if it is to compete with commercial operators.

There is considerable expertise in the child care sector but it is scattered throughout the country. In some regions the network of community-based child care is very fragile and clearly unable to take up the new funding offered. It appears for example to be very difficult to establish early learning and child care programs in smaller towns, northern communities or in vulnerable neighbourhoods in major municipalities.

Part of the solution lies in the creation of a child care development association which consolidates the country-wide expertise of the child care sector; links potential start-up programs with existing networks or provides direct support when local networks are unavailable. Where support networks do not exist, B2C2 will also work with local leaders to create the much-needed infrastructure.

With a pan-Canadian association, there will no longer be the need to ‘reinvent the wheel’. Experience and expertise will be readily available and widely communicated. The association would work with parent and community organizations, school boards and local governments to access a variety of resources to assist with the development process.

## **Mission Statement**

Building Blocks for Child Care: The Canadian Development Association for Early Learning and Child Care Service (B2C2) exists to promote the expansion of high quality, accessible non-profit child care; actively promote the growth, stability and potential of the community-based early learning and child care and to unite, represent and serve the community of non-profit early learning and child care programs across Canada.

## **Objectives**

- To promote and support quality in early learning and child care programs.
- To provide support and services to individuals and groups across Canada to start and operate high quality early learning and child care programs.
- To identify, provide and/or train consultants able to offer on-the-ground support to community organizations
- To identify expertise in design, organization, finance, legal and human resources and to link these experts across the country with community organizations developing community-based programs.
- To compile materials, information, resources and expertise that can be readily accessible to individuals and groups interested in starting community-based early learning and child care programs.
- To develop educational/training programs for boards and managers of early learning programs.
- To engage in a process of organizational development culminating in incorporation and establishment of local/regional, early learning and child care development associations.

## **Operational Approach**

The heart of this project involves the practical work of providing support and assistance to existing organizations, community agencies and local governments across the country seeking to establish high quality early learning and child care programs.

## **1. Mandate**

Building Blocks for Child Care: The Canadian Development Association for Early Learning and Child Care Service (B2C2) has been established as a non-profit agency with a mandate to identify communities interested in initiating, developing or expanding community-based early learning and child care programs. Building Blocks for Child Care, in collaboration with existing individuals and organizations, will have the organizational capacity to assist with the following operations:

- Establishing and maintaining quality benchmarks
- Effective program design and planning
- Construction and start up budgeting
- Architectural design
- Project/Construction Management
- Support for start-up and ongoing operations to include board development, market research, service coordination and operational planning,
- Training for Community-based Program Boards and Managers (developing core skills: managing program finances; outreach for enrollment planning; facilities and equipment maintenance; quality improvement; subsidy administration; privacy issues; conflict management;)
  
- Bulk Purchasing Program (including equipment, toys, appliances, paint, carpet, maintenance supplies, photocopiers, office supplies, insurance and employee benefit plans.)
- Financial Management for Community-based Boards
- Legal Services, including development of model by-laws, policies and procedures;
- Human Resource Management for Community-based Boards
- Public Education for Community-based Boards

## **2. Quality Assurance**

The first task of B2C2 will be to appoint a Panel of Experts to advise, strategize and establish quality benchmarks for the development process. The development of a pan-

Canadian early learning and child care system must devote considerable attention to improving quality – as well as quantity. The findings of Doherty et al in their path-breaking Report *You Bet I Care!* (2000)<sup>2</sup> together with those of the OECD Report (2004)<sup>3</sup> have reinforced the problems associated with mediocre quality in early learning settings and pointed the direction for quality improvements. B2C2 takes these issues very seriously and has adopted as a central axis of its mandate development criteria that conform to high quality services.

The Expert Panel will include organizational representatives and professionals experienced in early learning and child care development across Canada. One of the first tasks of B2C2, in collaboration with the Expert Panel, will be to establish a roster of professional experts who will be retained to deliver the variety of advice and expertise required by expanding community-based organizations.

### **3. Organizational Structure and Accountability**

B2C2 has been incorporated as a national non-profit organization. The incorporating board will be expanded in the Fall of 2005 to ensure regional representation. A part-time Executive Director will be retained to manage the operations. The Executive Director will be accountable both to the Board of Directors and to the Panel of Experts, appointed to ensure quality and equitable practices.

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<sup>2</sup> Doherty, Gillian, Donna Lero, Hillel Goelman, Jocelyne Tougas And Annette Lagrange (2000), *You Bet I Care!: Caring and Learning Environments: Quality in Regulated Family Child Care Across Canada*, Guelph, On: Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being, University of Guelph.

Doherty, G., Lero, D.S., Goelman, H., La Grange, A. & Tougas, J. *You bet I care! A Canada-wide study on Wages, working conditions, and practices in child care centres*. Guelph, On. Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being, University of Guelph, 2000.

## **5. Start-Up Phase**

This project envisages a three-to-five year start-up stage. Throughout the period, the developmental goals of the association will be to identify needs and provide services and support to groups developing early learning and child care across the country. These services would range from professional development services to helping groups put the programs on the ground, to information and materials, to providing on-line advice and assistance.

## **6. Local/Regional Associations**

A primary objective of Building Blocks for Child Care is to support the development of local, regional or provincial/territorial development associations. B2C2 will build on the existing strengths vested in existing organizations. For example, organizations such as West Coast Child Care Resources in British Columbia, the City of Toronto, the Child Care Sector Council, the YWCA and others already have a wealth of knowledge to draw upon. It is intended that new development of early learning and child care programs will mirror the best quality and the best practices offered by these organizations.

## **7. Financial Viability**

The immediate aim of B2C2 is to secure government funding. The development activity will require two types of funding. First, a secure grant base to support the core functions of B2C2, such as the collection and distribution of information and resources. Secondly, direct grants and/or fees recovered from provincial/territorial governments as an integral part of the capital expansion necessary to develop a system of early learning and child care across Canada.

In the short term, B2C2 will seek start-up funding from foundations and unions to begin operations and lobby for government funding.

## **8. Deliverables**

- Centralized library of resources
- Quality development benchmarks

- Start-Up Kits available to new community-based groups
- Roster of professional experts who can be retained to provide advice and support at the local level.
- Interactive Website with discussion threads, advice hotline, tips, etc.
- Local/regional development associations
- New B2C2-sponsored community-based early learning and child care programs

**Workplan: September 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006**

The RFPs and other arrangements for accessing new federal/provincial/territorial funds for expansion will be issued in the fall of 2005. Because of time frame constraints, much of the work identified will need to take place concurrently. The tasks include:

- Securing funding to launch the start-up phase.
- Seeking support from governments, early learning and child care organizations, academic organizations etc.
- Expanding the incorporating board to achieve regional representation;
- Compiling available resources available; identifying gaps; producing resources to fill gaps;
- Identifying and responding to opportunities for service and support to community-based community organizations;
- Developing website, brochures and other communication tools.
- Conduct first web-based evaluation in March 2006.