

**BUILDING BLOCKS FOR CHILD CARE:
THE CANADIAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY FOR EARLY LEARNING AND
CHILD CARE SERVICES (B2C2)**

Introduction

The need for Building Blocks for Child Care: The Canadian Development Agency for Early Learning and Child Care Services (B2C2) was originally identified in 2005 in response to the anticipated period of accelerated growth in early learning and child care programs. Such an agency was deemed urgent to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the new federal commitment of \$5 billion over 5 years and the resulting federal/provincial/territorial child care agreements.

In the agreements, there was concurrence to support and expand early learning and child care based on the QUAD principles: Quality, Universality, Accessibility and Developmental. There was also a commitment to share best practices and research findings. There were, and still are, few vehicles in place to support these commitments.

With a new Conservative government in Ottawa, opportunities for the non-profit sector appear even more bleak. If the new government proceeds with its plan to offer cash subsidies to parents and incentives to businesses and community organizations to create new spaces, the not-for profit sector needs to be poised to take action. This is why B2C2 will continue its activity to establish a community-based development agency.

Unlike other Canadian social programs, past and present federal governments have refused to direct funding for the new child care program to encourage non-profit expansion. This, coupled with the lack of infrastructure support, means many community-based programs will face difficulty accessing funds.

Experience demonstrates that the availability of unrestricted public funds squeezes out existing owner-operators and community-based programs in favour of corporate interests.

For example, Australia’s national government introduced similar measures a decade ago. Corporate child care chains emerged and gobbled up the public dollars. They now dominate the field and are posting record profits.¹ Meanwhile the media regularly reports miserable operating conditions and declining access for vulnerable populations.

The U.S. and Britain provide parallel examples. Also worrisome are provisions within the North American Free Trade Agreement that would provide U.S. corporations with equal access to public funding to expand their child care chains into Canada.

Public money should not bolster a private commodity. Child care should be a community asset. Where child care is located, who it serves, how and when it operates should not be the decision of entrepreneurs – large or small. Conversely, it cannot be left to the good will and resourcefulness of a handful of volunteers to develop essential services. If it is to compete in an environment created by any new federal child care initiatives, the community child care sector requires a stable and enabling infrastructure to support its development.

Child care in Canada has been aptly described by the OECD as a “patchwork service”². Existing programs largely reflect the commitment of community leadership. Sometimes they result from entrepreneurial efforts; far less often they are the product of planned development by municipal, provincial or territorial governments. In some regions, community-based child care is non-existent or very fragile. It is difficult to establish non-profit early learning and child care programs in smaller towns, new suburban housing developments, northern and rural communities or in vulnerable neighbourhoods in major municipalities.

¹ Emma Chalmers, Lifting profit simple as ABC, *The Courier Mail*. August 30, 2005. Following the acquisition of its two biggest competitors, ABC Learning Centres’ shares skyrocketed to \$88 million, up from \$77.6 million it predicted earlier. The Australian government spends \$1.6-million on child care annually. This roughly equals the total of existing and anticipated Canadian federal funding. (ECDI, Multilateral Framework plus new funding)

² OECD (2004) Early Childhood Education and Care Policy: Canada: Country Note, Paris: OECD

Despite its obvious weaknesses there is much expertise in the field. It is however scattered throughout the country. A child care development agency will consolidate the country-wide expertise; link those who want to start programs with existing networks or provide direct support when local networks are unavailable. Where networks do not exist, the agency will work with local leaders to create the much-needed infrastructure. By consolidating and communicating experience and expertise it will not be necessary for each community to reinvent the wheel.

Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of the work of the agency will be children and parents seeking quality, community-based early learning and child care opportunities. The agency will also benefit existing child care organizations, local planning councils, unions, institutions and community groups wanting to develop quality, not-for-profit child care programs. Governments (provincial/territorial/local) with a commitment to expand quality services will also benefit from the expertise of the organization. Communities will be enriched by new collectively-owned assets.

Vision Statement

Building Blocks for Child Care: The Canadian Development Agency for Early Learning and Child Care Service (B2C2) envisions a time when all Canadian children and their parents have ready access to high quality, non-profit early learning and child care programs.

B2C2 will enable this vision by promoting the expansion of high quality, accessible, non-profit early learning and child care in Canada. This will be achieved by supporting the design and start up of child care programs based on the QUAD principles, best practices and evidence-based research.

B2C2 fills a gap in the existing child care networks by providing support in the following areas:

- **Physical plant design** – promoting physical environments that support quality, accessibility and cost-effectiveness appropriate to the community’s needs and climate.
- **Effective service organization** – promoting service planning and effective partnerships to ensure new programs respond to community need and make use of, and are supported by, the capacity within their community.
- **Operational Start up** – providing support from the proposal writing stage through to assisting new boards to meet their legal obligation and establish effective business practices.
- **Quality promotion** – developing quality benchmarks in child care design and service organization and promoting best practice in program content.
- **Accountability** -- contributing to the development and implementation of accountability frameworks and reporting to Canadians about the progress of developing early learning and child care programs based on best practices.

Approach

The heart of this project involves the practical work of supporting organizations to establish high quality early learning and child care programs. B2C2 does not replicate the work of other organizations specializing in advocacy, research and/or training. Rather it will bring their knowledge directly to communities in the process of developing early learning and child care programs³.

1. Mandate

Building Blocks for Child Care: The Canadian Development Agency for Early Learning and Child Care Service (B2C2) is a non-profit agency with a mandate to identify and support communities interested in establishing and/or expanding quality, community-based early learning and child care programs.

³ For example, the City of Toronto Operating Criteria contains the most advanced quality assessment tool in the country. Toronto First Duty has developed models of cost-effective service organization. Jane Beach Associates, Victoria, B.C., is a leader in community needs assessments. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care *Child Care Management Guide* is an accessible training tool for new boards. The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada produces advocacy resources of parent boards.

2. Quality Assurance

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)⁴, together with those of the OECD Report (2004), 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.

A first task of the agency will be to establish an Expert Panel to include organizational representatives and professionals experienced in early learning and child care development from across the country. The Expert Panel will:

- Identify a roster of professionals who will be retained to deliver the advice and expertise required by child care organizations and community facilitators.
- Establish quality benchmarks in service and program design to guide the development process.
- Act as a resource to community facilitators.
- Identify resources to support the development of quality child care design and operations.
- Develop an accountability mechanism to track child care development
- Report to Canadians on the progress of child care development.

⁴ 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.

3. Program Development

Community Facilitators - B2C2 will recruit, train and provide resources and ongoing support to community facilitators. The Agency will identify local community facilitators who will encourage organizations to apply for funding to establish/expand non-profit child care. The facilitator will be available to support groups as follows:

- Proposal development (meeting required criteria, conducting needs assessment, developing business plans);
- Procuring professionals (architects, builders, etc);
- Providing project management;
- Supporting board development and the establishment of sound business practices (legal, financial, human resources);
- Developing quality programming.

Where a community does not have an available facilitator, B2C2 will provide one.

Professional Experts - B2C2 will identify expertise in service organization, physical plant design, construction, project management, board development, program operations and curriculum design and link these experts with child care groups. These experts will also act as a resource to the community facilitators.

Promoting Effective Practice - B2C2 will bring promising research findings and best practices from around the world to inform child care program and systems design and development. Through resource sharing and the development of 'Quality Benchmarks in Service and Program Design' B2C2 will help to promote quality beyond the programs it directly develops.

4. Public Accountability – B2C2 is mandated to support the development of not-for-profit child care in a competitive environment. It will create accountability tools that will both assess the status of non-profit child care development based on best practices, and monitor commercial incursion into the field. B2C2 will provide regular reporting to the

sector, governments and the public on the status of child care development. This will serve as a warning bell to help inform public opinion and shape public policy.

5. Local/Regional Agencies

B2C2 is mandated to enhance community capacity through the development of quality, non-profit child care programs. Through its work it will serve as a catalyst for the creation of local, regional or provincial/territorial development agencies.

6. Organizational Structure and Accountability

B2C2 has been incorporated as a non-profit agency. The incorporating board will be expanded to ensure regional representation. An 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.

7. Financial Viability

B2C2 fills a vacuum in the child care infrastructure. Its responsibilities more properly belong with government. If government is unwilling to take on the task, we believe it should fund those who are.

In Phase One (to March 2006) B2C2 is seeking one-time, start-up funding from foundations and unions to begin operations as it lobbies for government for a secure and ongoing funding base. Following the recent Canadian election, securing funding will involve an even greater challenge, but B2C2 will not shrink from this task.

, The agency envisions two types of funding to conduct its work. First, a secure grant base will support the core functions of B2C2, such as the collection, distribution and development of information, resources and expertise. Secondly, direct grants and/or fees will be recovered from provincial/territorial governments as an integral part of capital expansion.

8. Project Deliverables

- Centralized resources to support quality development

- Quality benchmarks in child care service design and program operations.
- Accountability framework and reporting mechanism on the progress of developing quality early learning and child care programs based on best practices.
- Child Care Program Development Start-Up Kits
- Roster of professional experts who can be retained to provide advice and support
- Trained consultants to provide on-the-ground, start-to-finish support to groups establishing/expanding programs
- Interactive website with discussion threads, advice hotline, tips, etc.
- Local/regional development agencies
- New B2C2-supported community-based early learning and child care programs

Workplan: September 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006

Some provinces have already launched their child care expansion plans and are proceeding to expand despite the change in federal government. Other provinces and territories are awaiting the direction of the new federal government before proceeding. Regardless of the federal government's decision concerning the funding agreements already in place, expansion of new child care spaces is a common goal. Even with a conservative government, there will be mechanisms to encourage expansion. B2C2 is adamant that this expansion must occur in the not-for-profit sector and aims to put the tools in place to facilitate this process – no matter which government is in power.

Demands for B2C2 activity will vary across the country depending on provincial/territorial government decisions. Consequently, 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;
- Recruiting Expert Panel to quickly coalesce resources, identify personnel and develop quality and accountability tools;
- Outreach to encourage groups to apply for new public funding and offer support.

- Compiling available resources; identifying gaps; producing resources to fill gaps;
- Identifying opportunities for service and responding to requests for support from community-based organizations;
- Launching website and other communication tools.
- Conducting the first evaluation in March 2006.

Personnel

An Executive Director will be the core staff during the initial start-up phase.

B2C2 will contract with professionals to provide advice and offer support to sites.

Community facilitators will be contracted to the sites.

BUDGET September 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006		
Item	Details (including GST unless specified)	Cost (Includes GST)
Revenue		
Grants and donations	Requests submitted to foundations and unions	70,149.00
In-kind donations	Office supplies, telephone, equipment, communications; printing supplies; materials; publications;	1,000.00
Total revenue		71,149.00
Expenses		
Professional Fees		
Executive Director	October 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006	29,960.00
Expert Consultants	Cost of engaging professional experts to advise, support or conduct training in local communities	5,350.00
Part-time admin support		5,350.00
Legal fees, disbursements	Incorporation costs	4,000.00
Travel Expenses	Consultations at 5 sites @ \$2,350 average/centre Consultants travel - \$3,000 (estimated)	14,750.00
Operational expenses	Office supplies, background reports, journals, publications, printing, photocopying, telephone rental, equipment rental, etc.	6,778.00
Website development, hosting and maintenance	Website development \$3,500 (estimated) Hosting \$16.05/month x 7 months=\$112.35 30 hours maintenance \$1,348.20	4,961.00
TOTAL		\$71,149.00

Budget Notes:

Revenues:

- a) Revenue to be sought from foundations, unions, and governments.
- b) In-kind services, such as use of office space, meeting space, equipment, publications, resources, etc. will also be sought.
- c) Expert partners will be asked to contribute their time and knowledge - a major pro bono contribution.
- d) Fundraising
- e) Internet advertising revenue

Expenses:

The organization will base its preliminary activities on the above Budget. Much of the preliminary work of assembling the Expert Panel, applying for funding, collecting, organizing and producing materials, identifying areas of potential development and community developers to undertake the development process, establishing a website and communicating the existence and activities of the organization across the country) will be possible under this Budget.

A more proactive agenda, that stimulates development and anticipates the costs of retaining experts in the field, will require a larger budget which will be compiled on application for government funding.

The identified expenses are of necessity general estimates. The extent to which B2C2 is able to predict the exact amount of travel required, or the exact number of professional consultant days will depend on a number of factors. The first is, of course, the amount of funding available; the second will depend on the processes adopted by individual provinces/territories in carrying out their expansions; and the third will depend on the ability of B2C2 to identify appropriate development opportunities and match them up with experts in the field. Strong management and financial control will be the key to successful implementation.