

Early Childhood Education and Care in the Cowichan Region

September 2011



Prepared by Social Planning Cowichan



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About Social Planning Cowichan

Social Planning Cowichan (SPC) is a registered society founded in May 2004 to provide leadership that brings the community together to create a sustainable quality of life for everyone in the Cowichan Region.

SPC was established by a lengthy community process and accepted the responsibility to carry out the recommendations developed through the Visions 2020 community forums to address social planning concerns in the Cowichan Region.

SPC is comprised of a twelve member volunteer Board of Directors and includes representatives of community organizations, local government, education, First Nations and the community at large. SPC is an affiliate of the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC), the Community Social Planning Network and the Vancouver Island Social Planning Network.

Our Mandate:

- To conduct research about the social health of the Cowichan Region
- To educate and inform the Cowichan Region community about social planning issues
- To facilitate partnerships and community consensus on issues and action plans
- To recommend action plans and short and long term strategies to improve the quality of life in the Cowichan Region

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About the Cowichan Child Care Council

The Cowichan Child Care Council is a subcommittee of Social Planning Cowichan. It was formed in 2007 to promote high quality, accessible and affordable child care in the Cowichan Region.

Cowichan Child Care Council Members

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Letter from the Child Care Council Chairperson

In 2006 the child care system in BC was identified as a concern by communities throughout the province, including the Cowichan Valley. Social Planning Cowichan conducted the research that validated and declared child care in crisis in our Region in the 2007 report *Child Care in the Cowichan Valley* and founded the Cowichan Child Care Council to address the recommendations in the report.

In 2010, community members informed the Council that child care was further in crisis. The Council initiated a parent and child care provider survey to examine the issues facing parents and child care providers in the Cowichan Region. The current report provides findings from the survey and other information regarding the cost and availability of child care. The report also makes recommendations to improve the current situation.

Child Care in the Region remains a fragile support system to children & families. Even as this report goes to print, the Ministry of Children & Family Development has announced the lowering of the threshold for families with Kindergarten and above aged children to access subsidy with less than \$21,000 a year income from \$31,000 and the elimination of minor capital funding for emergencies. After school subsidy has been increased for those who qualify by \$5.00-\$10.00 per month. One of our 5 large early learning group child care facilities is closing next month.

It is truly time to take action to address the child care issue. The Council hopes that Cowichan communities and all levels of government will link together to increase the availability of quality early childhood education for our children, families and the future of our communities. This report documents the importance of child care for early childhood development, the economy and family, community wellness. Early learning child care is an underpinning of our healthy society.

I wish to thank the Council members for their advice and analysis of the information and the author of the report, Linden Collette, Executive Director of Social Planning Cowichan. The report is comprehensive and thoughtful. I also thank the child care providers and parents who contributed to the report. Finally, I want to express my appreciation to the community members who will address the recommendations and work toward resolving this ongoing crisis in our community.

Landace Spilsbury

Executive Summary

The Cowichan Region has a deficit in quality, licensed child care facilities that are affordable for all families in the Region. Although the importance of early care and learning has been highlighted in research over the past two decades, action to address these deficits has been inadequate. The Human Early Learning Project (HELP), Success by 6, Aboriginal Success by 6, the Cowichan Valley Early Childhood Educators of BC and the Cowichan Child Care Council have all brought a strong case to Cowichan communities about the need to invest in our future through care and education of our youngest children. Local child care providers such as Growing Together and Parkside Academy have evidenced through longitudinal data the positive results in school readiness, social awareness, and success of children who have attended quality early care and learning programs. Families have found early learning programs valuable as ways of accessing other services, understanding child development and finding support in raising young families in a busy life.

This report illustrates that the number of quality child care spaces in the Cowichan Region has decreased by 421 spaces, during a time when the population of children needing care has been growing. The biggest need for spaces is for children from birth to 3 years old. There has been no capital funding available from the Province to create new child care centres since 2009. In addition, the amount of Provincial family subsidy available has remained unchanged since 2007¹, although the cost for child care has increased. This has effectively made child care out of reach for many families, forcing them to choose between work and school or taking care of their children. For families who are already financially challenged, this has a huge impact.

Child care and child care providers bring in over \$11 million dollars in income through earnings and provincial subsidy each year. These dollars are earned mostly by small businesses that are mainly owned by local women. Non profit societies have group child care centres with a strong emphasis on early learning as well as care. These centres typically employ several early childhood educators and assistants.

The addition of a full school day of kindergarten in the Cowichan Region school districts has not eliminated the need for child care programs for children aged 5 and 6. Families where parents are working or going to school require before and after school care for children of all ages. The addition of Strong Start programs has not eliminated the need for child care programs for children aged 0-5 as those programs require the attendance of the parent or caregiver with the child.

The role of early childhood educators and their assistants is not adequately understood by many people in the Region. These individuals have education and training in early childhood development and in aiding early learning through play- and relationship-based activities. Early childhood education and care is much more than babysitting.

Parents in the Cowichan Region report that their three major barriers to accessing child care are affordability, flexibility of hours and the need for part-time care. Child care providers cite financial viability as their main concern, in part because some parents have difficulty in paying the difference that subsidy does not cover. Their second largest concern is hiring and keeping qualified staff in a field that does not pay wages commensurate with other educators.

1. Child care subsidy increased September 1, 2011 by .25 per day for school aged children using after school care less than 4 hours per day and by .50 cents per day for school aged children using after school care for more than 4 hours per day. This increase was accompanied by a reduction in the cut off for full subsidy from \$33,300 net income to \$21,480 net income for families with kindergarten aged children attending full time child care.

The Cowichan Child Care Council makes the following recommendations regarding child care:

1. Provide capital funding to start up new child care centres
2. Phase in universal child care in BC starting with immediately increasing child care subsidy to all families
3. Enhance wages for early childhood educators
4. Continue to raise awareness about the importance of early learning in the Cowichan Region
5. Engage the Cowichan communities in consultation and action planning for early learning

Background

In 2007, Social Planning Cowichan published the report *Child Care in the Cowichan Valley Region* (Social Planning Cowichan [SPC], 2007), in response to community concern regarding the lack of child care spaces available for children. The research conducted for the report found that there were enough spaces in early childhood education and care programs in the Region to accommodate only 48% of children requiring child care. The child care situation was declared “in crisis”.

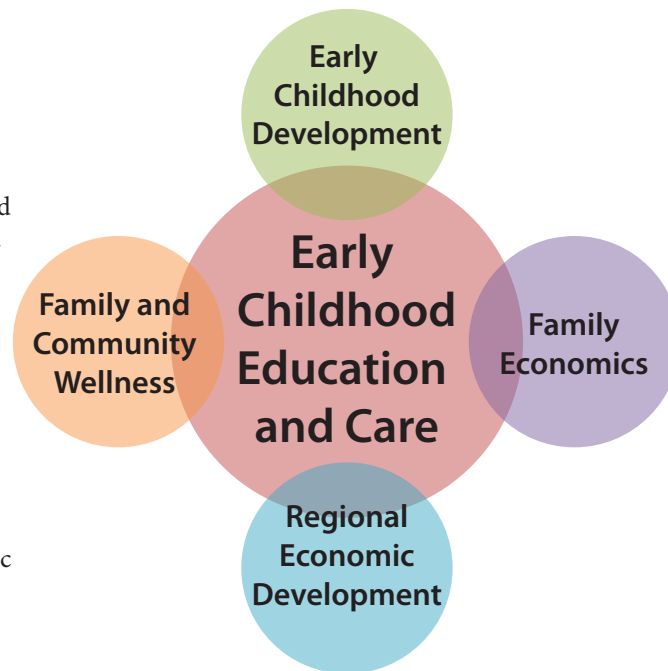
Recommendations to alleviate the child care crisis included implementing a Child Care Task Force, increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and bringing broad-based awareness of the issue to the community and all levels of government. Social Planning Cowichan provided the leadership to enact these recommendations and created an on-going Cowichan Child Care Council to advocate for affordable and accessible child care for all families in the Cowichan Region who want and need it.

Despite this initiative, the Cowichan community continued to indicate concern regarding child care. In 2010, Social Planning Cowichan, in partnership with the Cowichan Child Care Council, undertook further research to determine the case for child care, the current status of child care in the Region and recommendations for the future. This report is a summary of those findings.

The Case For Early Childhood Education and Care

Early Childhood Development

The case for quality and affordable early childhood education and care as a support for early childhood development is irrefutable. Quality child care staff members are caring and competent, attending to both the early learning and nurturing aspects of child care services. Studies have consistently linked early childhood experiences to children's emotional, social, academic and physical success. Children's success is often correlated to quality early childhood learning and care programs. Children who are provided with strong foundations and opportunities to succeed are able to prosper and give back to their communities later in life (Kershaw, Anderson, Warburton, and Hertzman, 2009).



Early childhood experiences help to build the structure of a person's brain. This structure, or "brain architecture" (Shonkoff and Phillips, Eds., 2008, pp. 219-225), is the foundation upon which people continue to develop and learn throughout life. Healthy brain architecture is built through frequent positive interactions with caring adults. Poor brain architecture is caused by repeated negative interactions with others or from fear, hunger and other environmental stressors. These stressors cause the release of chemicals within the brain which inhibit proper development.

Early childhood development relies on parents' and caregivers' means and ability to create nurturing, safe and stimulating environments for young children. For families relying on child care, this means quality programs with well-trained and caring staff. It has been demonstrated that quality child care programs can enhance early childhood development for children of all socioeconomic levels (Shonkoff and Phillips, Eds., 2008, pp. 219-225).

Education has long been regarded as the great equalizer, as it ensures positive experiences for all children, leaving no social or economic group disadvantaged. At no age is this more important than from birth to age 6. This is the reason for early education programs like Head Start and recently, Strong Start. The *Growing Together Child and Parent Longitudinal Follow-up Study* (Growing Together Child and Parent Society [Growing Together], 2010) presents evidence from a local child care provider that demonstrates the impact well-trained and caring early childhood educators have on young children and their families. The study also found that Early Childhood Educators were able to offer young parents

"While the poor are more statistically likely to be vulnerable, the majority of vulnerable children in BC reside in the more populous middle-class. Early vulnerability is a middle-class problem". – 15 by 15: A Comprehensive Policy Framework for Early Human Capital Investment in BC.

“Unless one is poor there is no assistance available but what about families in the middle income range? The burden of child care is HUGE -- enough to force parents out of the work force.” – Parent, Cowichan Bay, BC

with infants and toddlers parenting support and connections to community resources. The outcomes of these child care programs have proven positive results for both the parents and children. Data from the Parkside Academy Early Learning Centre from 2008 showed that children entering kindergarten from the Centre demonstrated significantly higher than average achievement levels on language skills than kindergarten students who did not attend an early learning centre (S. Webster, personal communication, February 19, 2008).

Family Economics

After World War II, economic prosperity and cultural values dictated the “ideal” family situation in which the mother remained at home raising children while the father went to work outside of the home to earn money (Kershaw, et. al., 2009). Changes in the culturally accepted roles of women and men and the increasing cost of living have made it desirable and necessary for many women to enter the workforce.

Studies have consistently linked the provision of quality child care with the ability of young families to participate in work, to return to school and to participate in community life (Shonkoff and Phillips, Eds., 2008, pp. 297-398). Increases in the cost of housing and other basic needs means that many households cannot provide a healthy environment without dual incomes. As 64.4% of Canadian women with children aged 3 years and under return to the workforce (Statistics Canada, 2010), the importance of accessible, quality child care programs has never been higher. The BC government subsidy program is based on the philosophy of helping only those families with low incomes access child care programs for their children. While this philosophy can be seen to address family and child poverty, it is out-dated.

Data from the Growing Together study points to an increase in achievement for children who attend a quality early learning program that supports parents. The Growing Together Program provides child care, parenting support and service referrals to parents who are attending high school completion programs. Results from the study indicate that mothers who were involved in the program during their high school years had a higher than average graduation rate than the general population of teen mothers (Bowlby and McMullen, 2002). This positions these young women to have higher earnings.

In fact, most of the children in BC who are considered vulnerable² are not supported by current provincial child care subsidy programs. According to data collected through the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) project, most of the children who have vulnerabilities in their intellectual, emotional and social development are in the economic middle class (Kershaw, et. al., 2009).

Economic Development

Recently, the economic impact of child care as its own industry has been highlighted through research in other jurisdictions across North America. Viewed through the lens of economic development, child care programs create jobs and contribute to the economy through buying goods and services and by providing the community with government funding.

Child care facilities in the Cowichan Region provide approximately 240 jobs for early childhood educators and assistants. This does not include substitute workers who work when the regular staff members are sick. A conservative estimate of the amount of wages earned by workers in this sector is over 6 million dollars per year.³ The provincial child

2. “Vulnerability” in this context means that a child is unable to do things that 90% of her peers can accomplish. At the kindergarten level this can mean that she is unable to hold a pencil, take herself to the washroom, or socialize with others in her class.

3. The average hourly rate for a child care worker is \$16.15 per hour. Approximately 80% of the child care labour force works full time (Working in Canada, n.d.).

care subsidy program provides over 5 million dollars to families and child care providers in the Region each year.

Family and Community Wellness

A healthy, low-stress home environment is a critical foundation for early childhood development. Poverty, poor nutrition, lack of adequate housing and violence in the home are environmental problems that are the most highly correlated to problems with early childhood development. However, other family stressors may operate in working- and middle-class households and can also contribute to vulnerability in early childhood. Health Canada's study on work-life conflict explored work and family interference and made several recommendations to help people attain better work-life balance (Health Canada, 2008). Access to child care based on family needs and preferences was a key recommendation. The study noted the role of employers, families, government and unions in making child care available, especially the lead role of government in ensuring that a variety of child care choices are made available to all families.

Flourishing families are the building blocks of thriving communities. Helping children become responsible, productive citizens is ensuring the social and economic well being of a community. This is the reason why every community member should be interested in and supportive of healthy early childhood development. Children are considered the social capital of a community and the key to a sustainable future.

The significance of early childhood education and care to early childhood development, community wellness, family economics and community economic improvement is clear. Attention to child care is critical in the Cowichan Region.

Child care workers bring in over \$6 million dollars per year to the Cowichan Region. Provincial subsidy for child care brings in over \$5 million dollars. The overall economic benefit to the Cowichan Region is over \$11 million dollars.

The Current Status: The 2011 Study

Scope

The information from this study includes data from all areas within the Cowichan Valley Regional District borders. This includes information on child care subsidies, wages and spaces from the Malahat to North Oyster and from Penelakut Island to Lake Cowichan. The municipalities of Ladysmith, North Cowichan, Duncan and Lake Cowichan are included.

Survey results are from a questionnaire distributed from June through August 2010. Child care subsidy information is from the Ministry of Children and Family Development Subsidy Office. The number of child care spaces is based on data from the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) Community Care Licensing Program, with verification through child care providers. Wage information is from the BC Labour Market Survey.

Limitations

VIHA data on the number and type of licensed child care spaces is kept up-to-date through the licensure office in Nanaimo. They do not maintain records of License Not Required child care spaces or on informal child care arrangements made between family members or neighbours. While many of these informal arrangements represent healthy, positive child care placements, this study focuses on licensed early childhood education and care only. Licensed child care has been demonstrated to provide staff with training in early childhood learning and care, facilities that are safe and clean and activities that promote early learning and development.

The BC Wage and Salary Survey was conducted by Statistics Canada in 2009. Data for the Cowichan Region is not specified. Estimates of early childhood educator wages include all of the Vancouver Island/Coast Economic Development area. Early childhood educators in Victoria and the Cowichan Region generally make higher wages than those on the coast and north island communities. However, the range provided is reflective of wages in the Cowichan Region based on verification from selected child care providers.

Subsidy information from the Ministry of Children and Families (MCFD) is for the past two complete fiscal years. At the time this report was written, not all of the information for FY 2010/2011 was available. That number will reflect less of a subsidy than was actually received in the Region.

The Child Care Survey was conducted from June 20 to August 25, 2010. The survey was administered to parents and child care providers in the Cowichan Region.

The Current Status of Early Childhood Education and Care in the Cowichan Region

The population of the Cowichan Region is approximately 84,000. The current population of children under 10 is estimated at 7825. The birthrate is currently about 800 babies per year and is expected to gradually increase to about 843 in 2015. Assuming that no more than half of the children in the Region require child care, the population of children needing child care will continue to grow for the next several years.

A conservative estimate of the earnings of child care workers in the Cowichan Region is \$6,232,608 per year.

License Not Required, or LNR, child care is a form of in-home child care provided by a person who meets health and safety standards and who has a minimum required training to provide child care.

Population of Children in Cowichan Region					
	Birth to < 1	1-4	5-9	Total	% Increase
2007	736	2960	4129	7825	-
2011	822	3196	4018	8036	10%
2015	862	3540	4379	8781	9%

TABLE1 Population of Children in the Cowichan Region (BC Stats, 2010)

Child Care Spaces

The Cowichan Region lost 421 licensed child care spaces between 2007 and 2011. The loss of spaces was greatest between 2007 and 2010. Although there has been an increase in the total number of spaces between 2010 and 2011, the Cowichan Region still has fewer spaces than was available in 2007. There has been a decrease of 40% in out of school care spaces, a decrease of 21% in preschool spaces and a decrease of 19% in group child care spaces for children 30 months to school age. The number of group child care spaces for children 0-36 months has remained the same. The number of family child care spaces has increased by 19%. In total, there has been an 18% loss in the number of licensed child care spaces in the Cowichan Region between 2007 and 2011. The chart below provides an analysis of the changes in licensed child care spaces between 2007 and 2011.

	Group child care 0-36 months	Group Child Care 30 months - School Age	Preschool	Out of School Care	Family Child Care	Registered License Not Required	Totals
2007	165	570	517	698	378	22	2352
2010	154	538	285	494	366	14	1851
2011 ⁴	164	462	411	422	448	13	1931
Change from 2007 to 2011	-1	-108	-106	-276	+70	No Change	-421

TABLE2 Change in number of child care spaces in the Cowichan Region⁽⁴⁾

Average Wages for Early Childhood Educators and Assistants

The 2009 BC Stats and Statistics Canada BC Wage & Salary Survey created regional estimates of wages and salaries by occupation. This information is for the Vancouver Island/Coast Economic Development area. It includes information from Victoria, where wages are higher, and from the coast and Northern Vancouver Island where there are more part-time positions.

Early Childhood Educators and Assistants	Full Time Hourly Wages:			Average Full Time Hours	% Employed Full Time
	Starting	Average	Maximum		
	\$12.00	\$16.15	\$20.90	35.2	59.4%

TABLE3 Wages for Early Childhood Educators in the Vancouver Island/Coast Economic REGION (working in Canada, n.d.)

Interviews with early childhood educators in the Cowichan Region reveal that the estimated wages found in the Wage & Salary Survey for Vancouver Island/Coast are

4.July 2011 figures (Vancouver Island Health Authority, 2011)

very close to what early childhood educators make in the Cowichan Region. However, a more accurate estimate of the percent of early childhood educators in the Cowichan Region who are employed full time is 80%. A conservative estimate of the number of early childhood educators and assistants employed in the Cowichan Region is 240. A conservative estimate of the total annual earnings of early childhood educators and assistants in the Cowichan Region is \$6,232,608 per year. In Canada, about 24% of early childhood educators are self employed. Nearly 100% of early childhood educators and assistants are women.

Provincial Funding for Child Care

The Province of BC offers subsidies to some families toward the cost of child care. The amount of subsidy is based on income. In order to receive subsidy for child care, a family applies to the Ministry of Children & Family Development (MCFD). The amount of the subsidy is paid directly to the child care provider. The care provider does not have to be licensed in order to receive family subsidy. Subsidy rates have not increased since 2007, although the cost of child care and other family necessities has continued to rise.

In addition to family subsidies, MCFD provides money to child care providers through the Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF). This is paid to operators of VIHA-licensed child care facilities based on the number of children enrolled. Child care providers receive more money for providing care to children with disabilities.

Fiscal year	Child Care Operating Fund	Child Care Subsidy	Total Funding & Subsidy from Province
2009/2010	\$1,257,975	\$3,962,571	\$5,220,546
2010/2011 ⁵	\$1,335,383	\$4,306,543	\$5,641,926

TABLE4 Amount of Provincial Child Care Subsidy to the Cowichan Region ⁽⁵⁾⁶

5. The Ministry of Children & Family Development had not processed all CCOF claims for 2010/2011. The amount of CCOF funding is likely to be larger for this fiscal year than reported here.

6. Data provided through the Ministry of Children & Family Development, Child Care Subsidy Centre, May 26, 2011.

Survey Results

Methodology

The Child Care Survey was distributed at family and children's events in the Cowichan Region from June 20 until August 25, 2010. An electronic version was emailed to child care centres throughout the Cowichan Region during the same time frame.

Sampling

The survey sample was not randomly generated. Survey participants were approached at locations and events that are frequented by families with children ages 0-12. As the survey sample was not random, readers should be cautious about assuming that the results are representative of all families and child care providers in the Cowichan Region.

Survey Methods

The surveys used for this research project were created by Social Planning Cowichan in collaboration with the Cowichan Child Care Council. One survey was developed for parents and guardians and a second survey was created for child care providers. Surveys were available through an online link on the Social Planning Cowichan website, the Cowichan Child Care Resource and Referral Centre and in hard copy at a number of locations and events in the Cowichan Region.

Surveys were distributed at the following locations and events:

- » "Whales Tales" in the Duncan Mall
- » Community Resource Bus (travels to several locations in the Cowichan Region)
- » "The Nest" Family Group in the Chemainus Community School
- » Several local schools and businesses
- » Cowichan Aquatic Centre in North Cowichan
- » Several child care centres in the Cowichan Region

Survey Promotion

- » Online ads were placed on Used Cowichan, Used Victoria, and Used Nanaimo and on Kijiji in Nanaimo and Victoria
- » Print ads were placed in the COOP Newsletter for families and child care providers and in four local newspapers
- » Child care centres promoted the survey to the families who use their services
- » Survey outreach was conducted at family events and activities throughout the Cowichan Region
- » Incentives were provided for people to complete the survey. Respondents who completed the survey had their names drawn for recreational prizes.

Survey Completion

The final survey sample for the Family Survey was 245 people. The final survey sample for child care providers was 14. Since this survey was not random and represents a small sample size, the results can be best used in a general way to identify issues of concern for parents, caregivers and child care providers.

Survey Limitations

There are approximately 9,720 children, ages 0-12 in the Cowichan Region. There are 35,156 households in the Region. The number of families with children in the Region is 23,225. This includes single as well as two-parent families.

For the child care providers' survey, the target sample was any individual that either owned or ran a child care facility within the Cowichan Region. The final sample size was 14 completed surveys from child care facilities.

The data from each question does not add up to the sample size because some questions allowed for more than one response. Also, some individuals did not complete all of the questions. Because the sample size was relatively small, questionnaires with some blank responses were still included in the final results.

The limitations of these surveys make the results useful as information which identifies issues in child care. In addition, comments made by parents and child care providers are helpful in describing how people are impacted by early childhood education and care.

Parent and Family Responses

Most of the survey responses came from the Duncan and North Cowichan Areas. The sample data is not reflective of the demographics of the Cowichan Region. However, the data may be used to identify general trends in parental requirements around child care and further questions in regards to child care needs in the Cowichan communities.

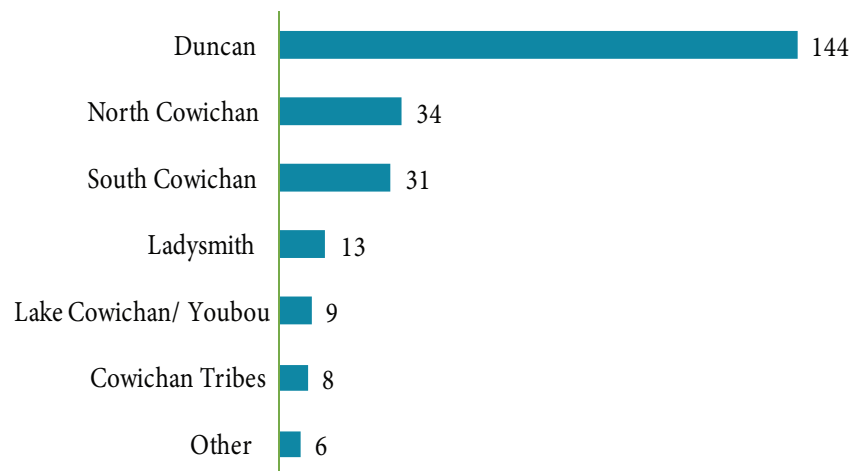


FIGURE1 Number of survey responses by area

I am staying home now. I was working but the cost of care was too much for 3 kids and it didn't make sense to work full time and then pay it all out in child care. It would cost \$2100/month for my 3 children.

-Parent, Shawnigan Lake

About the same number of parents are working or studying outside the home as are remaining home with children. This is not consistent with labour force trends throughout Canada, which indicate that 72.9% of women with children under 16 participate in the workforce (Statistics Canada, 2010). Nearly 33% of survey respondents indicated that affordability is a problem in accessing child care. The expense of child care may be a factor keeping one parent at home. This result may also be due to sample bias. It may be the case that parents who remain at home with their children were more likely to attend the events where the survey was distributed. It is unknown why 11% of the people who completed the survey did not respond to this question.

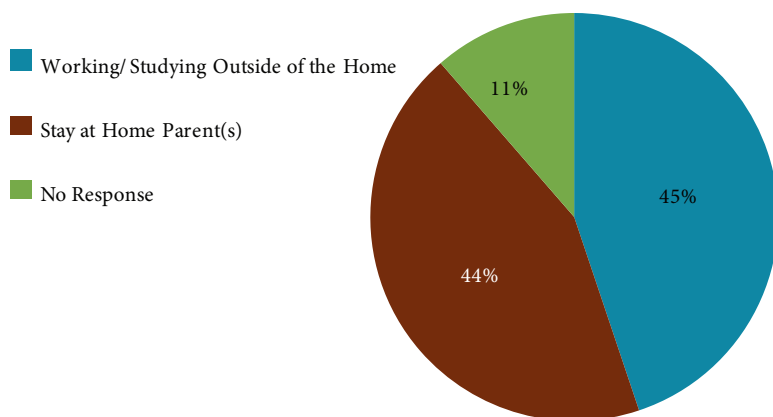


FIGURE2 Percent of parents working or studying outside of the home

Over half of the survey respondents have children under 3 years old. Half of the respondents have children 3-5 years old and 42% have children from ages 6-12. The cost of child care varies with age. Full-time infant and toddler care costs between \$850-900 per month. Children ages 5-12 do not need full-time care during the year.



FIGURE3 Age of Respondents' Children

Most of the survey respondents said that parents or other family members provide care for their children. 41% of respondents use parental or other family care. 67% use preschool and family child care at a slightly higher rate than other forms of child care. Some people use more than one type of child care.⁷

7. Percentages do not add up to 100% due to people using more than one type of child care.

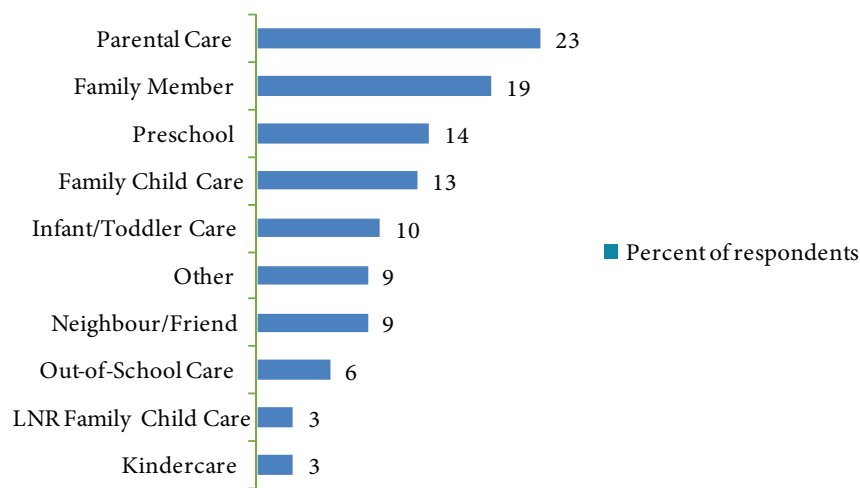


FIGURE4 Type of child care use by families

The largest barrier in accessing child care is affordability. Over 1/3 of respondents indicated that cost was a problem in accessing child care. A total of 41% indicated a need for flexible hours or weekend and evening child care. Quality of child care was cited as a problem for 23% of respondents.

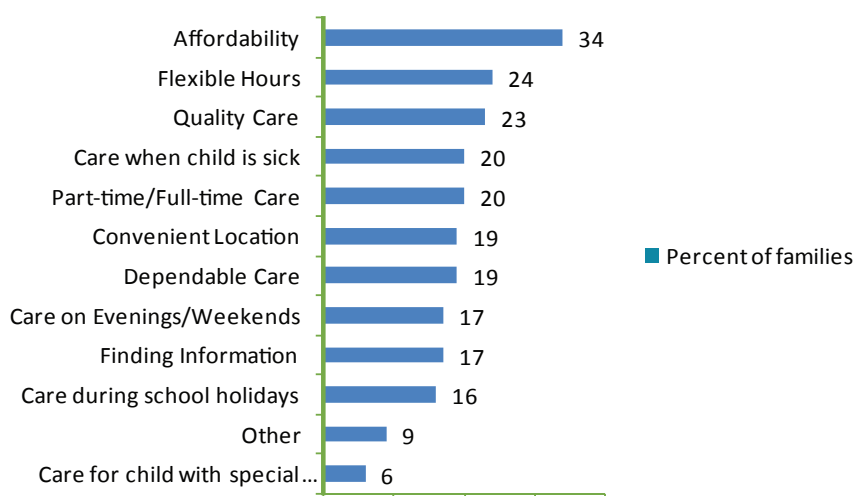


FIGURE5 Difficulties with finding child care

Most people are satisfied with the child care services that they receive. However, a notable 1/3 of respondents indicated that they are not satisfied in some way with the child care that their children receive. This is due largely to cost and lack of flexibility in hours.

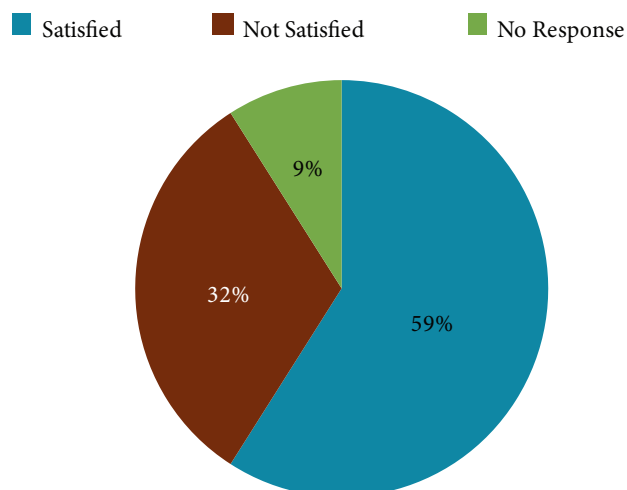


FIGURE6 Percent of parents satisfied with child care

Child Care Providers Responses

There are 128 licensed child care providers in the Cowichan Region. About 11% of providers participated in the survey.. Ten of the facilities are located in the Duncan/North Cowichan area. The other 2 are in the South Cowichan area. Eight of the facilities are non-profit and the remaining 6 are for-profit businesses. Six have wait lists. The number of children on waits lists range from 5- 30+.

Financial sustainability- it is very challenging to offer a high-quality, accessible program with minimal government support.
-Child care provider, Shawnigan Lake

Type of Child Care	Infant Toddler	Group Daycare (30 months-school age)	Preschool	Family Care	Out of School Care
Non-profit/ For profit	4/0	3/2	4/0	0/3	5/1
Number of survey respondents	4	5	4	3	6
Cost of ECEC services per child ⁸	\$850-\$900/ month	\$600-\$750/ month	\$237-\$250/ month	\$550-\$700/ month	\$260/ month
Has wait list	4	2	0	0	1

TABLE7 Characteristics of Child Care Provider Respondents ⁽⁸⁾

The greatest concern for child care providers is financial sustainability. 4/10 respondents noted that lack of adequate government subsidy or lack of timeliness in receiving the subsidy is a major concern. One respondent noted that the major concern was having families pay their child care fees on time. 3/10 respondents noted that inadequate enrolment is their major concern. One provider noted that this was due to full-day kindergarten removing the need for child care for 5 year olds. Another cited having a new business and lacking money to advertise. Staff retention was cited as a major concern by 2/10 providers. One provider stated her greatest concern is balancing complex licensure requirements for the number and ages of children in her program.

Balancing licensing requirements is hard. Lots of parents start part-time with their little ones and as they grow older want to add more time but I can't increase the time even if space is available in another age category.
-Family child care provider, Duncan

8. This varies depending on the age of the child

It is difficult to recruit and maintain Early Childhood Educators who are trained to work with infants and toddlers.

-Child care provider, Duncan

4/10 child care providers indicated that full-day kindergarten would not affect their facilities. 3/10 providers believe that full day kindergarten will decrease their enrolment. One provider is unsure about the affect of full-day kindergarten on her centre. One provider thinks that full-day kindergarten will provide her with more time to devote to other children at her facility.

7/10 providers commented that additional government funding for subsidy or universal child care is needed to cover the cost of child care. Two of the respondents indicated that they need more flexibility within licensure requirements around the regulations regarding the numbers and ages of children in their facilities.

The data that was collected from the child care providers suggested that a lack of funding was contributing to the decrease in child care spaces in the Cowichan Region. Fees have increased at some facilities, creating more pressure on parents and guardians. However, child care providers state that without the increase in fees, the child care facilities may not have enough funds to continue to provide service. Child care providers experience considerable pressure regarding fair wages, the hiring of new employees and keeping programs running. Infant and toddler programs are particularly expensive to run. Survey results indicate that the high cost of running infant and toddler programs could be a significant factor in the scarcity of these programs in the Cowichan Region. The survey also highlights the “domino effect”, whereby a lack of funding creates a decrease in staffing which results in the loss of spaces available for children needing child care.

Discussion

The number of available spaces for children in the Cowichan Region's child care programs has decreased by 18% since 2007, while the number of children in the Region has remained the same. The lack of spaces is particularly severe for families requiring infant and toddler care, care for children with special needs and flexible, after school care. With the initiation of full-day kindergarten, child care providers in the Cowichan Region are shifting their focus to out-of-school care. The cost and lack of availability for infant and toddler care is a significant concern in the Region.

Early childhood education and care facilities in the Cowichan Region provide employment and business opportunities. Sixty-eight of these facilities are small, family businesses run from home. Almost all of these jobs are held by women. Although wages have increased slightly since the 2007 report, they are still typically below similar education or care positions in union jobs where pay and benefits are higher. Nonetheless, a conservative estimate of the amount of income generated by people working in the child care industry is over 6.2 million dollars.

The provincial government provided subsidy to families and funding to child care providers at over 5 million dollars per year for the past two years. While the overall amount of subsidy to the Region has increased with the number of children in child care programs, the amount of subsidy available to individual families has not changed since 2007. Family earning power has not kept up with the cost of living and the rates charged by child care programs. This has the effect of shrinking the proportion of cost that the child care subsidy covers and further exacerbating the financial impact on families.

Working- and middle-class families who make too much money to access a child subsidy, but not enough money to afford quality child care without it, experience significant stress in maintaining work-life balance. With the rising cost of living, housing, food, transportation and child care, middle class families are struggling with the affordability of child care. Families seem to deal with this in different ways, including: using less expensive, non-licensed child care, having one parent work part time, having parents work opposite shifts so that one is always available to take care of the children, or having children stay on their own after school. These strategies can result in children not having adequate adult supervision and care.

Child care providers also reported financial concerns. While they have increased the amount they charge to families in order to retain skilled staff and provide quality programming, many are still unable to provide a livable wage to their staff. Capital funding, which used to be available to help with renovations and purchasing furnishings and toys, is no longer available.

Health Canada recommends that the government take the lead in ensuring that quality child care programs are available to all families. This will support excellent early learning opportunities and alleviate work-family conflict.

The data frequently cited the need for longer or more flexible hours for child care. Some families with two parents are able to schedule opposite work shifts, leaving one parent to take care of the children while the other works. For those parents who cannot alter their shifts, having flexible drop-offs and pick-ups from child care programs would make their lives more manageable. Some families need part-time child care for children, or start a younger child with fewer hours and increase them as the child gets older. Child care providers have indicated that they are aware of the flexible needs of families, but due to licensing requirements or lack of staffing are unable to accommodate those needs. People in jobs that require shift work deal with particularly challenging child care requirements.

*Most of our children
[who will be entering
full school day
kindergarten] will still
need before and after
school care.
-Child care provider,
Duncan*

Along with a need for flexible hours, parents and child care providers both cited the challenge parents face in picking up and dropping off their children. A child needing out-of-school care will require a facility in safe walking distance of his school. Some child care providers who live relatively close to schools are able to offer limited transportation services while others are not. Full-day kindergarten will help but not eliminate that concern.

Recommendations

The Cowichan Child Care Council makes the following recommendations based on the results of this report:

Provide capital funding to start up new child care centres

- » Put capital funding back in place to allow for the creation of new child care centres.
- » Develop new spaces for programs that serve families of infants and toddlers.
- » Create spaces with flexible hours to meet the needs of families that need earlier morning, later evening or part-time child care.

Phase in universal child care in BC

- » Increase subsidy immediately for families with low incomes.
- » Move toward universal access to child care by providing subsidy for all families regardless of income.
- » Create a universal system of child care for all families, eliminating the need for subsidy dollars.

Enhance support for early childhood educators

- » Increase wages for early childhood educators and assistants.
- » Increase public awareness of the role of early childhood educators.
- » Ensure that the system of early childhood educator training provides an adequate number of early childhood educators in the Cowichan Region.

Continue to raise awareness about the importance of early learning in the Cowichan Region

- » Continue to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood education and care.
- » Inform communities about best practices and positive outcomes in early learning and care.

Engage the Cowichan communities in consultation and action planning for early learning

- » Coordinate the efforts of early childhood service providers to follow through with the current recommendations through the Cowichan Child Care Council.
- » Engage communities in the Cowichan Region to explore local early childhood services needs and create an action plan to ensure that those needs are met.
- » Collaborate with First Nations communities to achieve an early learning plan for the Cowichan Region which will meet the needs of all children and families.

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Appendix A

Cowichan Region Parents' Child Care Survey 2010

6. In which area of the Cowichan Region do you reside?
- ☐ Cowichan Bay
 - ☐ Cobble Hill
 - ☐ Cowichan Station/Glenora/Sahtlam
 - ☐ Cowichan Tribes
 - ☐ Ditidaht First Nation
 - ☐ Duncan
 - ☐ Halalt First Nation
 - ☐ Ladysmith
 - ☐ Lake Cowichan/Skutz Falls
 - ☐ Lake Cowichan First Nation
 - ☐ Lyackson First Nation
 - ☐ Mill Bay/ Malahat
 - ☐ Malahat First Nation
 - ☐ North Cowichan (Chemainus/ Crofton/Maple Bay/Genoa Bay)
 - ☐ North Oyster/Diamond
 - ☐ Penelekut First Nation
 - ☐ Saltair/Gulf Islands
 - ☐ Shawnigan Lake
 - ☐ Stz'uminus First Nation
 - ☐ Youbou/Meade Creek
7. How many children do you have?
 _____ birth to 3 years, _____ 3 to 5 years, _____ 6 to 12 years
8. Are you a stay-at-home parent? Yes No
9. Do you work or study outside of the home? Yes No
10. What type of childcare are you currently using?
- ☐ Infant/Toddler Child Care (0-36 months)
 - ☐ Family Child Care
 - ☐ License Not-Required Family Child Care
 - ☐ Preschool
 - ☐ Before or after school care for kindergarten children
 - ☐ Before or after school care for grade 1 and up
 - ☐ Family Member providing care
 - ☐ Neighbour /Friend providing care
 - ☐ Parental care only
 - ☐ Other: _____

11. Have you experienced any problems with the following...? Check all that apply.

Problems/Challenges	Birth to 3 years	3 to 5 years	6 to 12 years
Finding information about local child care			
Affordability			
Finding dependable child care			
Finding quality child care			
Finding care (either full time or part time)			
Finding care in a convenient location			
Care on weekends/ evening			
Flexible hours of care			
Care when child is sick			
Care for child with special needs			
Care during school holidays			
Other: (please explain)			

12. Have you experienced any difficulties with finding childcare for more than one child?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ N/A

13. Are you satisfied with the level of childcare that your child is receiving?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14. Please tell us how your child care needs could be better supported...

15. Comments or Suggestions?

Thank you for completing the survey!

Appendix B

Cowichan Region Child Care Survey 2010

1. Name of child care centre/facility: _____

2. In which area of the Cowichan Region do you reside?
 - ☐ Cowichan Bay
 - ☐ Cobble Hill
 - ☐ Cowichan Station/Glenora/Sahtlam
 - ☐ Cowichan Tribes
 - ☐ Ditidaht First Nation
 - ☐ Duncan
 - ☐ Halalt First Nation
 - ☐ Ladysmith
 - ☐ Lake Cowichan/Skutz Falls
 - ☐ Lake Cowichan First Nation
 - ☐ Lyackson First Nation
 - ☐ Mill Bay/ Malahat
 - ☐ Malahat First Nation
 - ☐ North Cowichan (Chemainus/ Crofton/ Maple Bay/ Genoa Bay)
 - ☐ North Oyster/Diamond
 - ☐ Penelekut First Nation
 - ☐ Saltair/Gulf Islands
 - ☐ Shawnigan Lake
 - ☐ Stz'uminus First Nation
 - ☐ Youbou/Meade Creek

3. Is your program:
 - ☐ For profit
 - ☐ For non profit

4. Type(s) of child care provided:
 - ☐ Family Child Care
 - ☐ Infant/Toddler Child Care (0-36 months)
 - ☐ Preschool
 - ☐ Kindercare
 - ☐ Out-of-School Care (Grade 1 and up)
 - ☐ Daycare (3-5)
 - ☐ Informal Childcare

5. How much does it cost for each child per month for the following program(s)?

Family Care: _____

Infant/Toddler Child Care (0-36 months): _____

Preschool: _____

Kindercare : _____

Out-of-School Care (Grade 1 and up): _____

Daycare: _____
 Informal Childcare: _____

6. Number of child care spaces for which you are licensed/registered to care for:
 0-3 years: _____
 3-5 years: _____
 6-12 years: _____
7. Number of children currently registered full time:
 0-3 years: _____
 3-5 years: _____
 6-12 years: _____
8. Number of children currently registered part-time:
 0-3 years: _____
 3-5 years: _____
 6-12 years: _____
9. Do you have a wait list?
☐ Yes
☐ No
10. How many families are currently on your wait list? _____
11. Approximately how often do spaces open up/ become available at your facility?
☐ Monthly
☐ Every two months
☐ Every six months
☐ Annually
☐ Rarely
12. Approximately how many phone calls do you receive in a week from families inquiring about childcare?
For which group: _____
13. What is your greatest concern(s) for your childcare centre/facility?
14. If applicable, how will full time kindergarten affect your child care centre/facility?
15. Do you have any suggestions for solutions that pertain to child care issues?

Thank you for completing the survey!

