

Voters' Guide on Child Care 2020 BC Provincial Election

For 40+ years we have called on all political parties to commit to building a quality affordable child care system for children and families, a system where educators receive a decent wage. Now, for the first time in BC history, all 3 major parties have made substantial child care promises in their 2020 provincial election platforms.

This is a hard won and momentous victory for generations of families & educators who've advocated for decades for quality affordable child care. The election promises are a remarkable indication of our collective success at advancing systems change, as all parties, whether they have previously supported government investments in child care or not, now recognize the popularity of the \$10aDay Plan to voters, the importance of child care to British Columbians and the impact of child care on BC's economy.

In previous elections the BC NDP and more recently the BC Greens prioritized child care investments, and now the BC Liberals have too. This is a major shift! Our focus can move beyond calling on all parties to commit to child care to now holding whoever is elected accountable to deliver on \$10aDay policies.

Here is our summary of each party's current election platform, and their recent record, on child care affordability, the ECE workforce, child care spaces, financial commitments, and building a child care system. We also provide a brief analysis of each party.

For more information on the \$10aDay Plan see www.10aday.ca.

Child Care Affordability

BC Greens – Platform

- Up to 25 hours' free ECE per week for 3 and 4 year olds
- Free childcare for working parents with children under 3
- Maintaining child care subsidies and supports as needed to ensure adequate financial support for all families.

BC Greens – Record

Voted to support BC NDP child care investments from 2017-2020

BC Liberals - Platform

\$10-a-day for families with annual household incomes up to \$65,000;
\$20-a-day for families with annual household incomes up to \$90,000; and
\$30-a-day for families with annual household incomes up to \$125,000

BC Liberals - Record

Under the Liberals (2012 to 2016) the number of children with subsidized child care dropped by 23%. Median parent fees across BC increased by 3% per year over this time period, on average, while inflation increased by an average of 1%⁵ per year. Voted against BC NDP child care investments from 2017-2020.

BC NDP – Platform

- Will expand the number of \$10-a-day child care spaces
- And, will enhance other affordability measures (*Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative and Affordable Child Care Benefit*)

BC NDP - Record

Under the NDP (2017 to 2020) children with subsidized child care increased by 66%. Parent fees in infant and toddler centres decreased by 7% and remained stable for children aged three to five.

Also, the NDP state that their affordability initiatives combined to make \$10aDay child care available to more than 32,000 children since 2018.

Early Childhood Educator Workforce

BC Greens – Platform

- Professional development opportunities to increase qualifications of existing child care workers, and the training of more early childhood educators in certified programs.
- Establish professional wages for early childhood educators.

BC Green – Record

Voted to support BC NDP child care investments from 2017-2020

BC Liberals – Platform

Expand training and support for better-qualified child care workers.

BC Liberals – Record

Under the Liberals (2012 to 2016) real ECE wages declined. The median wage for ECEs working in licensed child care centres in 2016/17 was \$18/hour.

Voted to against BC NDP child care investments from 2017-2020

BC NDP – Platform

- Will make sure Early Childhood Educators (ECE) are a well-supported profession, just like teachers and other professionals who work in BC's education system.
- Will continue to implement and enhance the Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy which includes expanding our successful ECE wage enhancement program.

BC NDP - Record

Under the NDP (2017 to 2020) the decline in real ECE wages was reversed. Starting in 2019, the NDP government introduced an ECE wage enhancement totalling \$2/hour over two years. Effectively, this wage enhancement raised the median ECE wage to at least \$20/hour by 2020.

Child Care Spaces

BC Greens – Platform

Expansion of available physical spaces, prioritizing partnerships with public schools, community non-profits, and First Nations.

BC Green – Record

Voted to support BC NDP child care investments from 2017-2020

BC Liberals – Platform

- Build an additional 10,000 new child care spaces all across BC
- Encourage and support a variety of non-profit and market-based child care providers.
- Expand access to before-and-after school care in schools and create incentives for employers to support child care options for their employees.
- Work collaboratively with the federal government to further expand child care options.

BC Liberals – Record

- In 2001, 18.8% of young children in BC had access to a licensed child care space.
- Over 16 years in office (2001 to 2017) a total of 38,000 spaces were created, averaging less than 2,400 per year.
- The number of new spaces created did not keep pace with population growth, and by 2016 only 17.8% of young children had access to a licensed child care space.
- Voted against BC NDP child care investments from 2017-2020

BC NDP – Platform

- Will exceed their target of 22,000 new child care spaces by expanding the child care capital program and modular strategy for child care. When government builds a new school, housing complex or other projects they will work to ensure child care is included in capital plans.

- Will work towards providing universal access to before- and after-school care on school grounds
- Through new partnerships with crown corporations, universities, local governments, First Nations, and public and private sector employers, will work to make sure new office/business construction and upgrades will include space for child care centres, so that more parents can access needed child care at their places of work.

BC NDP - Record

- The NDP committed to creating 24,000 licensed spaces over three years, starting in 2018. MCFD data is available for the first 1.75 years of this commitment. 6,431 new spaces have opened, more than double the growth rate of the first two years after the 2013 election year. A September 2020 news release indicated that “more than 20,000 new licensed spaces have been approved for funding.” Most of those spaces (or others) will have to open by March 2021 to fulfill the 2017 election commitment on time.
- In 2019, 19.5% of young children in BC had access to a licensed child care space

Financial Commitment to Child Care

BC Greens – Platform

Would increase the child care budget by \$223 million in 4 years, from \$674 million in 2020/21 to \$897 million in 2024/25. \$300 million in new funding to phase in 25 hours of free early childhood education per week rising to \$550 million as capacity expands. Provide \$100 million to fund renovations and additions to existing schools to support ECE spaces.

BC Green – Record

Voted to support BC NDP child care investments from 2017-2020

BC Liberals – Platform

\$1.1 billion in new annual spending (*no further details*)

BC Liberals – Record

Over their last 4 years in government, the BC Liberals consistently underspent their child care budget. Actual spending in 2016 was the same as in 2013.

BC NDP – Platform

\$250 million each year for a total of \$1.5 billion additional investment over 3 years.

BC NDP - Record

\$1.3 billion investment of new spending over 3 years, 2018-2020

Building a Child Care System

BC Greens – Platform

Moving the Ministry of State for Child Care into the Ministry of Education.

BC Green – Record

Worked closely with the Minister of State for Child Care.

BC Liberals – Platform

- Implement a new, online province-wide electronic application that is voluntary for parents and required for all providers receiving government funding.
- Replace the Minister of State for Child Care with a full Ministry of Child Care to manage licencing, funding, and oversight.

BC Liberals – Record

Reliance on a market-based approach did not address issues of affordability, accessibility, quality or appropriate ECE remuneration.

BC NDP – Platform

- Will protect the principles of affordable, accessible, and inclusive quality child care in legislation.
- Will move responsibility for child care to the Ministry of Education. It will oversee delivery of all child care initiatives and funding, manage a capital investment program to build more new spaces, and ensure quality care through ongoing curriculum enhancements.

BC NDP - Record

Established a Minister of State for Child Care

Implemented the province-wide Fee Reduction Initiative

Established \$10aDay prototype sites

Introduced new legislation to make it easier for boards of education to deliver licensed child care.

Our Analysis of each Party

The BC Greens voted in support of the NDP investments over the last 3 1/2 years. A strength of their platform is support for moving child care into the Ministry of Education - a key element of building a publicly funded system. Their platform also addresses affordability for working parents of very young children and establishing a professional wage for Early Childhood Educators. However, they have not committed enough funds

to implement this promise in any timely way. They also continue to make a false separation between child care and early learning. We will be calling on them to support a greater financial investment and recognize that quality child care is early learning.

The BC Liberals promise is a significant shift for their party and includes a substantial financial investment. The key strength is their commitment to lower fees for BC families. Their approach will require wide-spread income-testing to assess family incomes and create a new ministry so it is not clear how quickly it can be implemented. We will be calling on them to move away from their previous market-based approach, immediately introduce a province wide wage grid for ECEs and ensure public funds are used to create public assets.

The BC NDP made measurable progress on child care in their first 31/2 years in office on parent fees, ECE wages, and new spaces. Their platform includes detail and costing for key next steps required to build a publicly funded accessible system including universal before and after school care on school grounds, a move to Ministry of Education, and a separate capital budget. They have committed the funds required to move incrementally towards these goals. We will be calling on them to immediately expand the number of \$10aDay sites across BC prioritizing programs located in facilities that are already publicly-owned, such as schools and community centres; to introduce a province wide wage grid for ECEs and ensure that public funds are used to create public assets.

Party Platform commitments:

BC NDP: https://www.bcndp.ca/sites/default/files/bcndp_platform2020_final4.pdf

BC Liberals: <https://www.bcliberals.com/2020/10/09/bc-liberals-announce-a-real-child-care-plan/>

BC Greens: <https://www.bcgreens.ca/platform>

Reality Check, Progress on Child Care in BC, 2012-2020:

https://www.policynote.ca/childcare-reality-check/?fbclid=IwAR3KDbNv_jJoFaVJAY8Y-iOXqrAUv4seAXzr8qnhGXrS4kSUQTEy1OwjS8o#.X4B0NdLOFcM.twitter