

## B.C. Inclusive Child Care Strategy and Engagement Report Release – Key Messages and Q&As

June 28, 2024

### Key Messages – Top Messages

- All children benefit from inclusive child care settings that are welcoming and celebrate the diverse identities and abilities of children, families and staff.
- We know families of children with support needs face unique challenges, and we're committed to building a future where inclusive child care is a core service that families can rely on. This means working towards equitable access to inclusive child care, where all children of every ability and background can fully participate and truly belong.
- Some child care providers have become experts in inclusivity, and some providers are in the early stages of their journey towards inclusive, culturally safe child care.
- To truly build inclusive child care as a core service, a systems-wide approach to inclusion and equity of access is necessary.
- We are working to make equitable access to inclusive child care a reality by launching the [Inclusive Child Care Strategy](#) and investing in resources to build on providers' foundational knowledge and skills in providing inclusive child care.
- The Province has released both an engagement report and a strategy on inclusive child care and they can both be found on the [ChildCareBC website](#).
- The [Inclusive Child Care Strategy](#) describes the foundation for a future state where every child has access to child care. This foundation includes:
  - Embedding equity and inclusion in all aspects of child care;
  - Supporting child care providers and professionals in gaining the knowledge and skills to provide inclusive, culturally safe child care; and
  - Meeting the specific needs of children who are neurodiverse, have a disability, or have other support needs.
- A requirement to develop and implement an inclusion policy is part of the new Operating Funding Model testing at a group of ChildCareBC \$10 a Day centres. The results of this process will inform future approaches.

### Secondary Messages

- As demand remains high for inclusive child care supports, government continues to invest in Supported Child Development (SCD) and Aboriginal Supported Child Development (ASCD) programs that are enabling more children to access inclusive child care in communities throughout the province.
- Engagement and consultation will continue to inform progress toward inclusive child care as a core service. This process will also include cross-ministry partnership and collaboration with child care partners.

### Key Messages: Cross Government Collaboration

- The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) is currently engaging with the public to inform the design of an effective service delivery model to support children and youth with support needs. This includes the delivery of SCD and ASCD programs.
- The Ministry of Education and Child Care and MCFD will collaborate to develop key actions for children and youth with support needs in child care settings following MCFD public engagement.
- As this engagement continues, the Ministry of Education and Child Care will continue to learn alongside MCFD to make progress towards a future where child care providers are empowered to deliver truly inclusive, culturally safe child care.

## Key Messages: Child Care and K-12

- The Ministry of Education and Child Care is working to increase school district capacity in supporting child care on school grounds. This work will help the Province make progress towards equitable access to inclusive child care, where all children of every ability and background can fully participate and truly belong.
- Each district across BC is required to have a child care policy ([Ministerial Order 326/20](#)) with a description of how the board will support inclusive child care.
- We know that families of children with support needs face unique challenges, including during the transition from child care to school and before-and-after school care.
- That is why the Province is continuing to explore how to strengthen supports for a smooth transition from child care to school and beyond for children and families who need support.
- As part of this work, the Province is working on pilot programs to test models to support child care on school grounds, ensuring continuity during the transition into K-12. Pilots help the province identify ways to support children with inclusive needs in board operated child care.
- The District Early Learning and Child Care Leads improve district capacity to integrate child care into the broader learning environment and expand access to child care on school grounds.

## Questions and Answers

### Q1. What's in the Engagement Report?

- From 2023 to early 2024, the Province facilitated a series of engagements to gain a deeper understanding of the existing barriers and opportunities to increasing access to child care for those who are experiencing inequity, including children with support needs.
- These shared experiences and insights have informed the development of the goals and actions described in the Inclusive Child Care Strategy.
- The [full Report](#) provides an overview of child care in B.C. and the themes heard during the engagement.
- Engagement and consultation will remain ongoing to inform progress toward inclusive child care as a core service.
- Past engagement participants include child care providers, families, Indigenous partners, inclusion and equity subject matter experts, school districts, cross-ministry partners and other sector partners.

### Q2. What's in the Inclusive Child Care Strategy?

- The Inclusive Child Care Strategy document outlines the Province's commitment to equitable, inclusive child care as a core service and identifies early actions the Province can take.
- The Inclusive Child Care Strategy is intended to describe a foundation for a future vision where every child has access to child care. The strategy looks towards a future which:
  - Embeds equity and inclusion in all aspects of child care,
  - Supports child care providers and professionals in gaining the knowledge and skills to provide inclusive, culturally safe child care; and
  - Meets the specific needs of children who are neurodiverse, have a disability, or have other support needs.

### Q3. Will there be new funding for inclusive child care supports?

- The Inclusive Child Care Strategy describes early actions that the Province will take to build equitable, inclusive child care as a core service.
- One of these early actions involves examining barriers within the current approach to inclusive child care supports, in collaboration with the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- In the current approach, Supported Child Development (SCD) and Aboriginal Supported Child Development (ASCD) programs help families and children access and participate in fully inclusive child care settings by assessing children's needs, working with child care providers and families to develop strategies for inclusion, and providing support worker hours if needed.
- Along with federal support, the Province increased funding for SCD and ASCD by more than \$30 million in 2022-23 – in addition to the annual \$70 million in provincial base funding and \$10 million in federal funding.

- As a result of this ongoing funding more children are receiving services through the SCD/ASCD programs on average per month, and the number of service hours children are receiving has increased.
- However, demand for SCD and ASCD is high and will continue to increase as new child care spaces are created.
- The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) is currently engaging with the public to inform the design of an effective service delivery model to support children and youth with support needs. This includes the delivery of SCD and ASCD programs. More information can be found through MCFD's CYSN [Engagement Portal](#).
- The Ministry of Education and Child Care and MCFD will collaborate to develop key actions for children and youth with support needs in child care settings following MCFD public engagement.

**Q4. Is the Province developing new programs to support inclusion and equity of access in child care?**

- To support child care providers and professionals in building and enhancing their foundational knowledge and skills for inclusive child care, government has invested in several resources and online training modules, which can be accessed on the [Inclusive Child Care website](#).
- Recently, in partnership with CanAssist, government released the Behaviour in the Early Years Initiative, which includes free online training and a set of resources to support child care professionals in understanding and responding to children's behaviours, particularly those that challenge adults.
- The Inclusive Child Care Strategy identifies goals and early actions for the Province, as it makes progress towards inclusive child care as a core service.

**Q5. Why does the Province need an Inclusive Child Care strategy?**

- We know families of children with support needs face unique challenges, and we're committed to building a future where inclusive child care is a core service that families can rely on. This means building a foundation for a future vision of inclusive and equitable child care, where all children of every ability and background can fully participate and truly belong.
- All children benefit from inclusive child care settings that are welcoming and celebrate diverse identities and abilities of children, families and staff.
- Expanding support for all child care, especially inclusive child care helps reduce poverty and inequities for families across B.C.
- The Inclusive Child Care Strategy describes how government will take a systems-wide approach to building child care as a core service that all families can rely on.

**Q6. How was the ICC strategy developed/created?**

- The Province conducted research and organized a series of engagements to gain a deeper understanding of the existing barriers and opportunities to increasing access to inclusive child care.
- Engagement participants included child care providers, families, Indigenous partners, inclusion and equity subject matter experts, school districts, cross-ministry partners and other sector partners.
- The experiences and expertise shared through these engagements informed the development of the Inclusive Child Care Strategy.
- Engagement and consultation will continue to inform progress toward inclusive child care as a core service. This process will also include cross-ministry partnership and collaboration with child care partners.

**Q7. Does the release of the engagement report mean that the Ministry is finished engagement related to inclusion in child care?**

- The Inclusive Child Care Strategy identifies goals and early actions for the Province as it makes progress towards inclusive child care as a core service.
- Further development, engagement and consultation is needed and actions will be taken to collaboratively plan this with First Nations, including Modern Treaty Nations, the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), as well as Indigenous communities and organizations including Métis Nation BC.
- More engagement with families and child care providers is also needed, to more deeply inform the specific work required to move towards an inclusive core service.
- The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) is currently engaging with the public to inform the design of an effective service delivery model to support children and youth with support needs. This includes the delivery of SCD and ASCD programs.

- The Ministry of Education and Child Care and MCFD will collaborate to develop key actions for children and youth with support needs in child care settings following MCFD public engagement.

**Q8. Can child care providers turn away/exclude a child because of the child’s support needs?**

- In B.C, child care providers in receipt of the Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) and the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI) are expected to make every reasonable effort to provide an inclusive and supportive environment for all children, including children with support needs; child care providers participating in the \$10 a Day ChildCareBC initiative must be willing to accept children with support needs into their program. However, as independent business owners, each child care provider sets their own program policies and determines admission according to their facility’s capacity to meet the needs of individual children.
- Unlike B.C.’s education system there is no legislated entitlement to child care.
- Some child care providers and professionals are experts in inclusivity, and some are in the early stages of their journey towards inclusive child care.
- Child care professionals with Infant Toddler Educator or Special Needs Educator certificates, also known as “specialized” or “post-basic” certificates will be eligible to receive the annual ECE Specialized Certification Grant child care professionals holding both specialized certificates will be eligible for a \$3,000/year, and those holding a specialized certificate will be eligible for \$2,000/year.
- B.C. is currently testing a requirement to develop and implement an inclusion policy in a group of ChildCareBC \$10 a Day centres as part of the new Operating Funding Model testing, and the results of this process will inform future approaches.

**Q9. What work is underway to support the integration of child care and education?**

- School districts are always focused on serving their students, this includes extending supports used during the school day to before-and-after school care.
- The Ministry of Education and Child Care is working with school districts to increase district capacity in supporting child care on school grounds. This work will help the Province make progress towards equitable access to inclusive before and after school child care, where all children of every ability and background can fully participate and truly belong.
- Each district across BC has a child care policy ([Ministerial Order 326/20](#)) with a description of how the board will support inclusive child care.
- We know that families of children with support needs face unique challenges, including during the transition from child care to school.
- That is why the Province is continuing to explore how to strengthen supports for a smooth transition from child care to school and beyond for children and families who need support.
- As part of this work, the Province is working on pilot programs to test models to support child care on school grounds, ensuring continuity during the transition into K-12.
  - Using existing StrongStart BC spaces, the Just B4 licensed preschool pilot is designed to support three- and four- year-old children the year before they enter kindergarten.
- The District Early Learning and Child Care Leads improve district capacity to integrate child care into the broader learning environment and expand access to child care on school grounds.
- The School Age Care Project is a two-year pilot that explores board operated before and after school care.
- Pilots help the province identify ways to support children with inclusive needs in board operated child care.

**Q10. What work is underway to support anti-racism in the child care sector?**

- All children benefit from culturally safe and inclusive child care settings that are welcoming and celebrate the diverse identities of children, families, and staff.
- The Inclusive Child Care Strategy identifies how the Province will build out child care as a core service where all children can truly belong.
- Implementation of the early actions in the Inclusive Child Care Strategy will include supporting and empowering ECEs and other child care professionals to provide culturally safe environments that foster anti-racist and anti-ableist practice.
- This work will include collaborating with our K-12 partners to learn from the implementation of the K-12 Anti-Racism Action Plan.