



THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

Telling Our Stories

The **Telling our Stories** initiative gave clear examples of the challenges facing BC families who are seeking child care. The themes were the same across all regions.

Both our national and provincial organizations have policies calling for early learning and child care plans supported by proper funding which will meet the needs of today's families.

CFUW BC Council and clubs have called for a Provincial Poverty Reduction strategy. Parents' stories demonstrate how urgent the need is for improved access to quality child care.

These stories underscore the importance of improving access to child care as a key action not only in addressing poverty in BC but in delivering economic benefits to the Province.

The Canadian Federation of University Women BC Council launched its **Telling our Stories** initiative in April 2014 at its Annual General Meeting. CFUW's 23 clubs across BC were invited to gather stories about the experiences of families in their communities in accessing child care services. Questions were prepared to guide discussion, and stories were recorded and sent to BC Council's Child Care Committee in early 2015 .

This report summarizes the key themes mentioned in the stories, and illustrates through comments, the first hand experiences currently faced by families in different regions of the province.

The report also highlights the fact that many families are left trying to patch together quality child care they can afford and that fits their schedules. This causes stress for children and parents, as well as grandparents. **Telling Our Stories** is a continuation of CFUW's work over the last three years on a Poverty Initiative.

Parent Voices

ON QUALITY

- *"I had to utilize low quality child-care, run by unqualified people as the wait lists for high quality child care programs are full."*
- *"Knowing that my children were not safe or cared for as well as they deserved was very stressful for me."*
- *"I have had to turn down jobs because I have not been able to find child care of quality when needed."*
- *"Searching for child care that was affordable, appropriate or available has been a huge challenge. It has impacted our ability to work...It has impacted our stress levels and therefore our family function and relationships."*

ON SPACES

- *One parent contacted over 100 people trying to find a child care space in their community. "The biggest barrier to me has been finding child care that meets my schedule as a working single parent."*



Parent Voices

ON COST

- *“Wait lists are too long and the cost is too high, especially if you have more than one child. We have three children. It has been impossible to find good quality, affordable daycare so my husband lives in another city, the family and I had to move closer family who can help with child care whilst I work at my profession in the health care field. This is not an ideal family life but with family help I have been able to juggle everything.”*
- *“We had a terrible time finding quality, consistent care for our baby. Waitlists are ‘out of sight’ even if you can afford the cost.”*
- *“Child care is simply NOT available when you need it and is too costly.”*
- *“Financially daycare has always been difficult for us. If there wasn’t daycare subsidies I would not be able to work at all.”*
- *“Many parents work full time and because they make just over subsidy requirements they will never be able to afford child care. They will always have to rely on family and friends for child care – it is impossible to cover day-to-day bills and still afford child care.”*
- *“The Federal Government Child Benefit helps but I am still paying \$1000.00 per month for our child. That is an awful lot for a family’s budget, especially when you factor in housing and food costs.”*

Grandparent Voices

ON COST

- *“I was providing full time care of four children because a licensed child care facility was unaffordable, as well as availability in rural areas was limited...so a grandmother and great grandmother did all the care for the children.”*
- *“I cared for a one year old baby two to three days a week. Dad reduced work hours and did child care for other two days. For half a year the family lived with us in order to save for a house.”*
- *“We sold our house to help our daughter find a house in the same city so then we can help with child care.”*
- *Due to family issues, I moved from Alberta to BC to care for the children 5 days a week. I was over 80.”*

ON COMMUTING

- *“I connect with other grandmothers doing child care because of affordability issues. They talk about the joys and the challenges of the dual role of grandparent/caregiver and about issues such as health, time, and energy.”*
- *“My daughter found a space in a family daycare but when the second child was born the daycare could not take the baby. Another search for daycare ensued and even when they found care for both children we, the grandparents, are back-up child-minders and do the pick-up of children from daycare.”*



Parent Voices

ON SUBSIDIES /CHILD CARE ALLOWANCES

- *“Families cannot afford the cost even with child care subsidies.”*
- *“The complicated submission for child care subsidy is very stressful.”*
- *“As a child care provider the government’s reimbursement is frustrating.”*
- *“It only covers about one tenth of the cost.”*
- *“It is nice but not very significant given the cost of child care.”*
- *“If you factor in other costs like transportation to and from daycare, lunches, late fees and other expenses the allowances don’t even cover that.”*

QUALITY CHILD CARE IS A KEY DRIVER OF A VIBRANT ECONOMY AND OF HEALTHY COMMUNITIES IN BC

- Child care is the second highest household expense for Canadian families
- Investments in child care strengthens the economy-with a benefit of two dollars for every dollar invested

ACT NOW

ASK your elected officials to take action NOW to implement a comprehensive child care strategy that gives families the support they so urgently need.