

June 15, 2011

BC Family Child Care Association
6878 King George Blvd
Surrey, BC V3W 4Z9

Dear Diane and Members of the BCFCCA Board,

Last month the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC released our finalized *Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Care and Learning* (enclosed).

As you know, this Plan emerged through an extensive process that included over 60 community briefings in more than 25 BC communities. Through this process, we distributed over 5000 copies of our Emerging Plan and received 700 written responses.

From our experience, the breadth and depth of the consultation on the Emerging Plan was unprecedented for small community organizations like ours. We are proud of the meaningful dialogue we encouraged and supported.

For the most part, the response to our Emerging Plan was overwhelmingly positive as people from diverse sectors were excited by its potential to make a real difference.

Our briefing process included family child care providers who were invited to all community events across BC. Many of these providers also responded very positively to our Emerging Plan and welcomed the inclusion of family child care in the system with the same opportunities and requirements as those afforded all other forms of child care.

However, as you know, some of your members and other family child care providers did not support the Plan. While we worked hard to clarify unfortunate misunderstandings about the Plan, it was evident that some providers have a different perspective on early care and learning than we do. Some suggested that universal systems undermine families; that group care is harmful; that the current low supply/high demand market place works well and that providers' independence and business viability is paramount.

We respectfully but fundamentally disagree. We are convinced by the evidence that the status quo is not working for children, families and many caregivers. This left us with two responses to the negative feedback from some family child care providers. We could eliminate family child care from our vision as some suggested. Or, we could reaffirm our commitment **to family child care as an essential feature of a system that works for children, families and communities**. Clearly, we chose the latter.

We know that many children and families benefit from the long term relationships, the smaller group size and the mixed age groups that family child care provides. That is why our finalized Plan continues to welcome family child care into the new system and to support their enhanced quality and sustainability. The Plan does not require those who don't share our vision to participate in the new system. We wish them well but do not plan to spend our limited resources trying to convince them otherwise.

We had hoped that with these points clarified, your organization would be in a position to endorse the Plan or, at a minimum, would share with your members and the public the elements of the Plan that you can and do support.

With this in mind, we looked to your recent *Discussion Paper on Family Child Care in BC* for areas of common ground where we could move forward together. While some of the Paper's stated principles provide a potential starting place for further discussion, we regret that the paper prioritizes increased public funding to sustain and promote the family child care business model, rather than on the role family child care can play in ensuring that families have access to affordable, quality child care.

As we understand it, at its core your Discussion Paper recommends the introduction of 5 new 'levels' of family child care. The Paper suggests increases in:

- public funding through subsidy and CCOF at parity with group care but with no accountability for using these funds to lower parent fees.
- training/educational requirements still well below ECE licensed to practice requirements for most levels of care.
- licensed capacity enabling one provider to care for more children, particularly infants and toddlers.

The Paper also suggests more monitoring of providers who are non-compliant, some community planning (although with no apparent mandate to guide development) and marketing of family child care.

While we see that these changes may well increase family child care's business viability, the paper does not describe how these changes will result in reduced parent fees or move to caregiver educational levels that reflect quality international standards. Without these kind of accountability measures in place, the proposed changes do not yet, in our view, reflect the fundamental restructuring required to ensure that all children and families have access to affordable, quality care.

To address these underlying problems, the evidence indicates a need for planned growth, professional levels of caregiver education, adequate operating funding tied to system accountability measures and democratic control and engagement. All of which are central to our Community Plan.

That is why we hope your organization will add your voice to those endorsing the *Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning* (<http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/plan/endorse-the-plan/>) and work with us to support family child care providers within a high quality, publicly funded, accountable system.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet with your full Board of Directors to discuss the important work ahead and look forward to an on-going respectful dialogue.

Susan Harney
Chair
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

Denise Marshall
President
Early Childhood Educators of BC