

Our Emerging Plan for an Integrated System of Early Care and Learning in BC

A Community Update

November 2010

This fall, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC released *Our Emerging Plan for an Integrated System of Early Care and Learning in BC*.

Since then, we have been invited to brief many communities across BC about the Plan's potential to resolve BC's child care crisis and build a system of early care and learning that meets the needs of children, families and communities. The purpose of the Briefings is to ensure our ideas are part of the public dialogue about extended early learning services, and to learn from community responses, as we move to finalize the Plan and mobilize community support for its implementation by government.

We are pleased to share this update about our progress.

By mid-December we will have hosted close to 40 briefing sessions in over 20 BC communities. We will have reached more than a thousand people directly including child care and other early childhood services providers, parents, municipal and provincial politicians, school trustees, ECE instructors, government officials, social justice and labour partners, child care licensing officers, and teachers – just to name a few. We will also have distributed over 4000 copies of the Emerging Plan to individuals and organizations across the entire province and made the briefing presentation broadly available through a Webinar.

The great news is that the response is overwhelmingly positive! Our Emerging Plan is garnering more excitement and enthusiasm that we could have imagined.

ECEs and other child care providers tell us they appreciate that the Emerging Plan respects young children's rights; builds on the field's strengths and professionalism; welcomes a range of providers in to a new system and supports ECEs to become strong and equal partners in a new relationship with education.

Those beyond child care tell us they can understand and support the picture we paint about the contribution early childhood education makes to communities. Rather than restating the problems, our Plan offers them workable and concrete solutions.

Across the province, the boldness, thoughtfulness and optimism reflected in the Emerging Plan is stimulating renewed energy and commitment to act.

In fact, one of our biggest challenges has been to capture this energy and support before we even have a chance to finalize the Plan.

Of course, questions remain. While nothing yet leads us to question the fundamentals of our Emerging Plan, some issues we are considering as we move to finalize our Plan in early 2011 include:

- Respectfully acknowledging innovative practice while staying focused on system wide policy changes. As we celebrate the work in many communities to bring care and learning together, our focus will remain on the system changes required to ensure this happens everywhere.
- Placing the Plan within comprehensive family policy that includes the additional contribution government and the business sector can make through family friendly policies in the workplace, poverty reduction strategies and a fair system of taxation.

- Providing opportunities for engaging in dialogue with Aboriginal communities and providers of programs for Aboriginal children and families.
- Recognizing the importance of sufficient and flexible resources to meet the needs of families who face social, cultural and/or economic challenges or who work non-traditional hours.
- Inviting BC's family resource programs and others in the early childhood community to develop and share their perspectives on how their services fit within or parallel the new system.
- Extending the potential for Early Years Centres to also offer access to health, support and therapeutic services for young children.
- Acknowledging BC's existing Bachelor Degree in Early Childhood Care and Education and that this degree and other post secondary initiatives are the place from which to establish new educational goals for the field and ensure system wide access to ECE undergraduate degrees.
- Clarifying that proposed Diplomas for family child care and school age care providers need to respect and reflect the nature of the work done by these providers, including caring for children in mixed age groups and supporting children to greater independence in their middle years.
- Reducing confusion about terms that mean one thing for child care and another for education.

Finally, our Plan needs to highlight that the integration of early care and learning is a process that will take time. It won't always be easy and we will all need to build trust and demonstrate a generosity of spirit as we move forward.

On December 15 our Briefing Process comes to an end.

Until then, you can share your ideas, questions and support by:

1. Reviewing the Emerging Plan – now available on-line at www.cccabc.bc.ca or www.ecebc.ca
2. Responding to our on-line survey at http://surveymonkey.com/s/emerging_plan
3. Viewing the Webinar online at www.cccabc.bc.ca or www.ecebc.ca (available after November 15)
4. Attending a Briefing Session in your community (for information contact your local ECEBC Branch or ECD Table).

Early in the new year we will consider the input and finalize our Plan. We won't be able to answer every question or include every suggestion but we trust those who take the time to respond will feel heard.

Then, in the spring of 2011, we will focus our energy and resources on mobilizing community support for the Plan through public education and community activities that **impel government to act**.

Many people have been so enthusiastic and supportive of the Plan that their first question to us is... when will the Plan take effect? The answer to that depends on our collective ability to convince decision makers that the Plan is what BC wants and needs.

We trust that those who are excited about the Plan will work with us to contribute resources, make connections and mobilize support for action.

We humbly thank you for your support and the trust you have put in our work. Together, we can and will make a difference.