



COALITION OF

# child care advocates OF BC



*Working together for a community based, non-profit child care system that is high quality, affordable, accessible, publicly funded and accountable.*

Honourable Mary McNeil  
Minister of Children and Family Development  
Room 306  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012

Dear Minister McNeil,

We are pleased to read in recent media reports that you recognize the need to make child care in BC more available and affordable. We are also pleased to hear that you agree the Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning has ideas worthy of consideration.

The media reports suggest your remaining concern is cost. First, we would like to correct what appears to be a misunderstanding about our costing projections. The total additional cost of fully implementing the Plan for 0-6 yr olds is \$1.5 billion a year not \$2 billion as you suggest.

Further, the Plan recommends moving Early Care and Learning into the Ministry of Education. It does not suggest taking scarce funds from your budget that we agree should be used to support and protect BC's most vulnerable children and families. The Ministry of Education's annual operating budget is over \$5 billion which puts the suggested investment in children from birth to six in perspective.

Finally, the Plan proposes a 5-10 year phased in implementation. Given the research demonstrating that Quebec's \$7 a day system already generates a return of \$1.05 for every \$1 invested, we fully expect that at the end of a decade, the BC system will generate more revenue than it costs.

We are currently working on implementation scenarios to enable government to phase in the Plan and would be pleased to share our emerging options and associated incremental costs with you.

Finally, we note that in a recent visit to Fort St John, the media reports that "Instead of talking numbers, (you'd) prefer to talk ideas, and see what can be done with a smaller budget. (You) say the challenge is to find ways to give families lots of options, which could include tax savings."

We are very interested in the ideas your government is considering. That said, we strongly caution you to resist imagining that there are a number of 'creative' ideas out there that simply haven't been thought of or tried yet. Believe us, communities like Fort St John and others have done everything they can to keep child care programs open despite the ongoing and deepening child care crisis.

Co-ops, parent participation, social entrepreneurship are not new ideas. Decades of experience in BC demonstrate that without strong public policy and adequate funding – none of these are a magic bullet.

Tax savings, the one specific idea reported on from your Fort St John visit, are not new, creative or viable child care solutions. For decades the Federal government has provided a limited Child Care Expense Deduction for families with sufficient income to pay for receipted child care and to pay taxes. This deduction has been of limited benefit to lower income families, has not created additional quality spaces and has not provided assurances that children are being cared for in a quality setting. Similarly, the results of the so-called Federal Universal Child Care Benefit have failed to improve access to quality, affordable child care. It might interest you to know that child care fees already erode families' take home pay more than do taxes. The real innovation and biggest cost savings for families would be \$10 a day child care.

If you have alternative ideas that can solve BC's child care crisis – we welcome an opportunity to discuss these with you. Failing any forthcoming concrete solutions, we will continue to build public support for our \$10 a day Plan because the status quo is not acceptable.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Harney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'y'.

Susan Harney, Chairperson  
On behalf of the CCCABC