



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.

August 2009

Mayor and Council,

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) wishes to add our voices to those in our community calling for strong, sustainable and updated Development Cost Levy (DCL) policies.

First, we want to applaud Vancouver's leadership in using this tool to build quality child care facilities in City neighbourhoods. At the time, the City's inclusion of child care as a standard growth related facility that needed to be planned for and provided in new developments was a groundbreaking initiative. Today, the large number of families with young children who live and access downtown child care facilities demonstrates the value of this far reaching policy.

We understand that DCL rates have not been adjusted since 2003. During that time, the development and real estate sectors realized unprecedented profit and growth – in large part because of the investments City residents made to keep Vancouver one of the most liveable cities in the world. We believe that Vancouver must maintain its ability to provide public amenities and necessities, including child care, and that the development industry must fund their fair share of growth related costs.

It is important to remember that during a boom for residential development, there was no windfall for child care or other social services. In fact, since 2001, child care services in BC experienced cuts in the operating funds provided by the provincial government and, with the loss of dedicated federal transfers for child care, more hardship is expected in the coming year.

The CCCABC was therefore supportive of Council's initial intent to fully catch up for inflation rates and lost purchasing power in a rate increase effective January 2010. Due to "market uncertainty" and challenges facing the development industry, we now understand that the City is only considering a partial 'catch up' rate increase at this time.

While we remain supportive of any increase that makes up for some of the City's lost purchasing power, we strongly recommend that this partial increase not become a new 'benchmark' and that the City also adopt policies to ensure a full catch up with annual adjustments for inflation.

We note that child care facilities are facing the same economic challenges as the development community with no 'breaks' from any level of government in sight. As a result, parent fees are up, wages for early childhood educators remain shamefully low and wait lists for quality spaces are growing. Given what we now know about the importance of quality experiences for young children in their early years – we will all pay the price for this situation.

Nor are difficult economic times a reason not to invest in child care. In fact, investment in a community based child care system is a key element of any effective economic recovery strategy. Access to quality child care makes it possible for parents to train, retrain and find employment. It ameliorates the negative effects of poverty on young children. Investment in child care has a greater multiplier effect than other sectors. And, most importantly, it lays the foundation for healthy child development.

For almost 20 years, the City of Vancouver has been a leader in supporting access to quality child care for all. We fully expect that this Mayor and Council will protect and strengthen this legacy. Supporting DCL rates that enable the City to develop childcare facilities that meet the needs of a growing City is one way to demonstrate this commitment.

Sincerely,



Susan Harney, Chair
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC