

British Columbia Healthy Child Development Alliance

July 17, 2008

Early Childhood Learning Agency
Ministry of Education
Box 9158 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9H3

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing on behalf of the British Columbia Healthy Child Development Alliance. The Alliance is a coalition of health, social, education, research and community organizations sharing a common interest in supporting the healthy development of all children in BC. The purpose of the Alliance is to provide leadership in encouraging and supporting the development and implementation of policies and strategies that are essential to ensuring the healthy development of all children in BC. We are pleased to respond to the call for feedback on the proposal to expand early learning in British Columbia.

To support the work of the Early Learning Agency, the Alliance would like to submit key documents which represent the work of individuals and organizations involved in early child development across BC. These documents are the results of two forums sponsored by the Alliance in an effort to identify needs and opportunities for advancing a healthy child development agenda in BC. The first forum was held in 2004 (400 participants) and provided the momentum for the formal development of the Alliance committee as it exists today. The second forum was held in 2007 (170 participants) and represented a continuation of the work that began at the inaugural forum. The goal of the group of practitioners, researchers, service providers, decision and policy makers at these events was to provide key recommendations for promoting the health of our province's youngest citizens. Although a number of recommendations were made during these events, I would like to highlight the consensus of these participants around the issue of child care:

Put in place a child care system that supports universally accessible child care that is:

- *Clearly and directly connected the school system and child development centres.*
- *Provides a range of direct care and early learning activities, programs and services that are, as per the F/P/T Early Childhood Development Agreement.*
- *Geared towards the needs of parents who work.*


(From Forum 2004 Recommendations)

Educate the public on the importance of healthy ECD and the critical role which child care providers play in that development. Through this process, raise the status of child care providers through the shift in public attitude and provision of appropriate remuneration for their role.

(From Forum 2007 Recommendations)

We would encourage that the early years planning currently underway across government, which includes early learning and care, be informed by the results of these forums. The Alliance, which meets on a regular basis in both Vancouver and Victoria, would be pleased to act as a resource in this planning.

Best regards,



Robert Peterson, MD, PhD, MPH
Chairperson
BC Healthy Child Development Alliance