

March 20, 2007



To Minister of State for Childcare, Linda Reid:

The Board of ECEBC, the professional association for Early Childhood Educators in BC, is shocked and disturbed by the Ministry of Children and Family Development's latest assault on child care services, announced on Friday, March 16.

When the government's original decision to cut all CRRs completely was reversed and a reduction of \$5 million from the CRR programs was made, we were left with an inability to understand why this government had felt it necessary to put the child care sector and families through such turmoil! These latest cuts reveal that government is not finished expressing its lack of respect and support for children, families and childcare providers in BC.

The decision to completely close three Childcare Resource and Referral Agencies in Kitimat, Gibsons and Walnut Grove and to cut operating funds to the remaining CRR programs by \$5 million continues the swath of destruction that began on January 5 of this year. All existing CRR programs will have their funding cut significantly. As well, these cuts are being applied with great discrepancy between regions and amongst programs within regions. With the loss of infrastructure from the cutbacks and higher overhead due to recent ministry ordered expansion, programs will at the very least, be forced to reduce services.

Now, just when the childcare community thought things could not get worse, it was announced that \$800,000 will be cut from Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre alone, **effective in just six weeks!** The Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre forms a huge part of the foundation for quality childcare in BC. It has been in operation for 20 years and employs almost 50 dedicated people. This cut will decimate valued, provincially delivered programs that are vitally important in providing the following services for parents, child care providers and child care organizations throughout BC:

- Diversity training
- Leadership, Administration and Management workshops, print resources and consultations
- Safe Spaces Bullying Prevention program
- Mobile Lending services
- Workshop curriculum packages
- BC Family Child Care Training Hub
- The Westcoast Library

This is a loss that is too substantial to measure; **unique programs that took years to build will be gone before we can even catch our breath.** These decisions continue to reflect a frightening lack of vision, understanding and valuing of early learning and childcare services by the current government. They continue to throw the early learning and childcare services into turmoil and dismay.

We continue to ask: “What is the purpose of these cuts?”

Millions of dollars are going to Ministry of Education for Early Learning programs that will be delivered free but only to families with a parent home to attend with their children.

Why?

Why are working families again not being considered?

Where is the understanding and recognition of the early learning that is part of all quality childcare programs?

It isn't necessary to create a new system of early learning - the results desired will be achieved when there is a complete understanding of the value of adequately funding the early learning and childcare programs run by the early childhood sector.

We also wonder at the province's announcement of these cuts when the federal government has announced the reallocation of its federal spaces money which will send an additional \$32 million to BC for Child Care.

The current shortage of childcare in the province, with thousands of parents on waiting lists makes any cuts to childcare absolutely incomprehensible. Communities have a growing awareness of the connection between their economic health and vitality and the availability of quality childcare to families.

Other provinces are stepping forward despite the cancellation of the federal early learning and child care dollars. Both Nova Scotia and Alberta have recently announced increased funding specifically targeted to increase wages of Early Childhood Educators, in an effort to expand programs with qualified and properly paid staff.

It is time for the Government of BC to take responsibility for the destruction it is causing, to step up to the plate and start managing the programs for young children and families with reason, vision and wisdom. We respectfully await your response to our questions.

Respectfully,

Toni Hoyland,
President and the
Board of ECEBC

cc: Premier Gordon Campbell
Hon. Shirley Bond
Hon. Tom Christensen
Carole James
Claire Trevena