



Dear Minister of State Reid,

Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) is reeling from the Ministry of Children and Family Development's recent announcement of cuts to child care operating funds, capital funds, child care subsidies, as well as elimination of funds for Child Care Resource and Referral agencies.

ECEBC members, the licensed practitioners working in early learning and child care facilities throughout the province, were struggling to cope with the lack of resources even before this announcement. The child care communities are dealing with a system in ongoing crisis with not enough child care spaces, long waiting lists for parents and not enough trained staff to increase spaces and accommodate the need. As MCFD well knows, Early Childhood Educators have worked for very low wages in an effort to keep parent fees low enough for parents to afford the care, while attempting to advocate for additional support. A mass exodus of child care staff from the field and programs closing their doors will impede the ability of parents (i.e. taxpayers) to remain in the workforce.

The government is well aware of the importance of the early years as documented in recent government publications: "The years between birth and age six are a critical time in a child's life. The nurturing that occurs in early childhood influences health, well-being and learning skills for a lifetime." (Summary of Community Consultations, MCFD and Ministry of Education)

The child care community asks government: "Why are you pretending that you care, when everything you do shows that you don't care?"

In your funding cut announcement, Minister Reid, you say, "The government's goal is to create a quality, flexible child care system that works for BC families, supports our most vulnerable children and that is sustainable over the long term". We remind you that **all** children in the early years are "**most vulnerable**" as the early years are the most critical time for brain development. Ensuring quality experiences is vital for all children! Maintaining a system at all with these brutal cuts is incomprehensible. A flexible, quality system requires tangible government support and a clear commitment and vision for early learning and child care in BC. The upcoming funding cuts will undermine the child care profession and erode the already tenuous 'core of care' for children outside the home.

You tell us, Minister Reid that the current funding cuts are in response to the end of the federal child care funds at the end of March 2007. What did this government do to advocate for maintaining this funding? Where is the provincial commitment to funding child care programs? Where is the rationale for making such sweeping cuts when the foundation of child care services will be seriously destabilized?

We were in crisis before, but this government action forced on an early learning and child care system already in crisis will have devastating effects. A depleted child care workforce can no longer absorb the financial hits by government. The loss of operating funds will force providers to raise parent fees... if they are raised to reflect the true cost of child care, the \$100 a month that families may receive now from Ottawa won't begin to cover the increase.

A system of quality, affordable, accessible early learning and child care helps to keep our families and communities healthy and economically viable. ECEBC believes government needs to look again at their priorities and target some of the surplus budget to creating positive outcomes for the youngest citizens of the province! Investing in child care will have far reaching social and economic benefits far into the future.

With the imposed fragmentation and splintering of child care in BC, who in the field will be there to reach out and take the tiny, upheld hand of a child and to ensure that all of BC children's health and well-being are safeguarded outside the home?

ECEBC urges government to make its commitment visible... Step forward and show that you really do care! We would welcome the opportunity to speak to you about these issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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President
ECEBC

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