



**ECEBC** | early childhood  
educators of BC

March 17, 2020

Honourable Adrian Dix  
Minister of Health  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria , British Columbia

Dear Minister Dix,

**Re: COVID-19 Pandemic: Child Care Closures in BC**

In anticipation of the news conference for Tuesday, March 17th, ECEBC is stating its position on the inclusion of childcare and early childhood educators related to the strategies to address COVID-19.

**What are we asking for?**

That the Government of British Columbia mandate a full closure of child care centres, effective immediately. That the Government of British Columbia engage with the Federal Government to make a concerted effort to coordinate the funds to allow for the closures to take place.

**What are the main messages we want to convey?**

Prioritize health and safety of all children who are in all types of childcare settings (as defined by the Community Care Facilities Act), the educators that care for them and by association the family members. We acknowledge that essential service providers may require childcare and so a plan will need to be in place to support them.

**Social distancing** - Based on the directives of Canada's Chief Medical Office, Dr. Theresa Tam and BC Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry, it is not possible to practice social distancing in child care. In addition, the new directive to limit gatherings to 50 persons or less, large centres that have over 50 children in their space will not be able to adhere to this recommendation. This would increase the risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus. Regardless of the size of centres, we cannot be assured that children, parents and educators are practicing social distancing and other safe practices while not at the centre.

**An ethics of care** - As early childhood educators we practice an ethics of care to work in ways that support children and families. We promote the health and well-being of families and we work in partnership with colleagues and other service providers in the community to support the well-being of families. We have an ethical responsibility for the health and safety of children and families.

**Rights of children** - We must make visible the voice of children which is being silenced in the current political discussions. We feel very strongly that child care facilities were not being recognized beyond that of a service delivery which places the economy as a greater importance than the health of children, families and educators in child care centres.

**Increased risk** - We are very concerned with what is being asked of centres, children, educators and families in continuing operations. Our concern is greater for the vulnerable people that may be placed at increased risk by having many people in and out of the centres than is essential for the care of the children. What is the point of keeping childcare centres open if they end up closing because they become centres of infection rather than protection?

**Need for Government guidance** - We feel that there is incredible stress on educators and directors, as they balance multiple responsibilities; they are tirelessly working to maintain ratio, during a critical staff shortage in BC, while concerned for their and their families health; they are being put in a position to engage in challenging dialogue with families, with little to no information to share. Educators are looking for government to support and guide them during this time.

**Financial Support** - We support our partners, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC's directives released March 17th, 2020 which state:

1. The resulting decision regarding closures, and related rationale, is applied clearly, consistently and province-wide to both schools and child care.
2. Educator wages are protected, without requiring parents to pay for services they cannot receive.

We urge government to take action that protects the lives of our youngest citizens, their families and the people who work in this profession.

*The Early Childhood Educators of BC envisions a society where early childhood educators thrive in a supportive community that values childhood and education.*

Sincerely,

Violet Jessen- ECEBC Chair  
Emily Gawlick- ECEBC Executive Director

Cc: Honourable John Horgan, Premier  
Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health  
Honourable, Katrine Conroy Ministry of Children and Family Development  
Honourable Katrina Chen, Minister of State for Child Care  
Honourable Rob Fleming, Minister of Education  
Dr. Bonnie Henry, BC Provincial Health Officer