

March 28, 2024

Premier, David Eby
Minister of Finance, Katrine Conroy
Minister of Education and Child Care, Rachna Singh
Minister of State for Child Care, Mitzi Dean
Ministry of Children and Family Development, Grace Lore

Dear Premier and Honourable Ministers,

The Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC) would like to express our concern regarding the continued fragility of StrongStart programs, and by extension, their ability to provide continuous services that meet the needs of children and families in their communities. Furthermore, it perpetuates the instability of the Early Childhood Education profession overall.

Since 1969, ECEBC has worked to advance the quality and professionalism of early care and learning. As part of our ethical responsibility to the profession, we strategically commit our time and resources to educating the sector and community by investigating and promoting the development of strong public policies and best practices that are based in research and evidence.

We believe in the Province of BC's vision of embedding early years programs, such as StrongStart, into the fabric of the Ministry of Education and Child Care. As stated: "current research underscores the importance of supporting children, and by extension their families, during the early years."

StrongStart is a low-barrier program provided at no cost to families in many BC communities, offering a free alternative to early years experiences for children who may not otherwise have this opportunity. It is an essential program facilitated predominantly by certified Early Childhood Educators in providing equitable community-based socialization for children entering the school system. This essential support for families provides community building, interaction with a school setting that has proven positive transition data, and opportunities for early childhood education.

With recent developments in the Surrey School District StrongStart programs, it again has highlighted the need for changes that move away from dividing funding priorities for children under five years old and over five years old. All programs in school districts need to be supported and well funded.

ECEBC believes that stable funding that is embedded in a cohesive system, supported by certified Early Childhood Educators, are essential to building an accessible, affordable, and high-quality early care and learning sector. This requires a commitment by the BC provincial government to full and ongoing sector-wide funding, including to vital programs such as StrongStart. This broad holistic perspective is possible and essential. This helps support the ability of British Columbians to be healthy, happy, and thriving.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with you further and trust that you will act with the needs of all children, families, educators, and communities in mind.

Sincerely,



Emily Mliczko
ECEBC Executive Director

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Andrew Holland, Deputy Superintendent, Surrey School District.
Laura Larsen, Board Chair Surrey School District
Cindy Dalglish