

Provincial & Regional Partners:

Aboriginal Mother Centre Society
ACT Autism Community Training Society
Adoptive Families Association of BC
Affiliation of Multicultural Societies & Service Agencies
Alternate Shelter Society
Association for Community Education BC
ACT – Autism Community Training Society
BC Aboriginal Childcare Society
BC Assoc. for Child Development & Rehabilitation
BC Association for Community Living
BC Association for Play Therapy
BC Association of Child Care Employers
BC Association of Family Resource Programs
BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs
BC Association of Social Workers
BC Council for Families • BC Crime Prevention Association
BC Early Years Alliance • BC Farm Women's Network
BC Federation of Foster Parents Association
BC Government & Service Employees' Union
BC Institute Against Family Violence
BC Pediatric Society • BC Recreation and Parks Association
BC School Trustees Association • BC Teachers' Federation
BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses
Boys & Girls Clubs of BC
Canadian Association for Young Children
Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division
Canadian Red Cross • Capilano Student Union
Cerebral Palsy Association of BC
Child & Family Counseling Association
Child & Youth Care Association of BC
Child Care Advocacy Forum
Children's & Women's Health Centre of BC
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Council of Parent Participation Preschools BC
Deaf Children's Society of BC
Dietitians of Canada, BC Region
Early Childhood Educators of BC
East Kootenay Childhood Coalition
Family Services of Greater Vancouver
Federated Anti-Poverty Groups
Federation of BC Youth In Care Networks
Federation of Child & Family Services of BC
Fulcrum Project • Health Officers Council of BC
Infant Development Program of BC
Institute for Safe Schools of BC
International Dyslexia Association, BC Branch
Justice Institute of BC
Labour Environmental Alliance Society
Learning Disabilities Association of BC
Literacy BC • McCreary Centre Society
MOSAIC • Nisika Community Services
National Council of Jewish Women
Pacific Association of First Nations Women
Pacific Community Resources Society
Pacific Legal Education Association /PARCA
Parent Support Services Society of BC
Penticton & District Community Resources Society
Public Health Association of BC
Self Help Resource Association of BC
Social Planning & Research Council BC
Society for Children & Youth of BC
Society for Public Education of BC
Society of Special Needs Adoptive Parents
Sunshine Coast Community Services Society
United Way of the Lower Mainland
Vancouver Coastal Health – Population Health
Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre
Westcoast Family Resources Society
Working Group on Poverty • YWCA of Greater Vancouver

Community Coalition Partners: 100 Mile House, Abbotsford, Armstrong, Burnaby, Chilliwack, Delta, Duncan, Fraser North, Golden, Grand Forks, Houston, Kamloops, Kelowna, Langley, Maple Ridge/ Pitt Meadows, Port Alberni, Prince George, Salmon Arm, Smithers, Squamish, Surrey, Terrace, Vancouver, Vancouver Aboriginal Council, Vernon, Victoria, Williams Lake

December 5, 2007

Ms. Lesley du Toit
Ministry of Children and Family Development
4th Floor, 765 Broughton Street
PO Box 9721 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9S2

Dear Lesley;

First Call's coalition partners have had a number of opportunities over the past few months to discuss your Ministry's Good Practice Action Plan, including at our Coalition Meetings and Early Childhood Development Roundtable. While we did not receive the Plan directly from your office for comment, we offer the following summary of the comments we have heard in the spirit of cooperation and support for the Ministry's work.

This feedback does not purport to be a comprehensive review of the Plan, nor to represent the agreement of all of our partners. Additionally, we know you have already received feedback directly from some of our coalition partners and that there may be differences among the views expressed, as is to be expected within a cross-sectoral coalition like First Call.

Comments:

- It is good to see recognition of the importance of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the UN's work on the Rights of Indigenous Children, named in the principles and outlined in the actions and outputs under Objective 4.1.
- The principles respecting cultural and ethnic diversity, fairness and equity and non-discrimination are also good to see articulated. We await more information on how improvements in these areas are to be integrated into the plan's priority actions.
- It is also good to see the intent to establish an advocacy function within the Ministry at both the provincial and regional levels and to be responsive to issues raised through the office of the Representative for Children and Youth. Support for self-advocacy on behalf of families, children and

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youth and for Ministry staff to be strong advocates for children and youth is a most welcome objective, and needs to be embedded at the local level. Community concerns about retribution in response to case advocacy and systemic advocacy need to be addressed.

- Priority Action 4, to analyze gaps in social development and poverty reduction in relation to MCFD's role, is timely and deserves the urgent cooperation of the other relevant ministries.
- The Ministry is currently under-resourced, as are contracted community services providers, with the result that the goals of the Plan cannot be accomplished without an infusion of new funding.
- Participants at our ECD Roundtable in particular noted that a comprehensive focus on early childhood development is lacking in the Plan. While the Principles state that family and community development and accessibility to a variety of supports should be a primary concern, the importance of the early years is not apparent in the goal statements. Specific actions related to early years supports and services are included in the Plan, but they appear to be fragmented and missing attention to universally accessible programs and supports for families with young children. We have attached a brief summary from First Call's *Early Childhood Development in BC: A Framework for Action*, a community-developed document, outlining the five essential components of supports and services for early childhood development, which you may find helpful in augmenting the Plan.
- It is not apparent how the Plan explicitly links to the recommendations of the Hughes report.
- There is concern over the timelines for many of the Plan's deliverables, and skepticism that these deliverables can be met on schedule.
- It would be good to see rewards for innovation incorporated into the Plan.

First Call represents a broad coalition of provincial partners whose knowledge and experience of issues impacting children, youth and families are an excellent resource. We are eager to see the Ministry succeed in improving supports to families and safeguarding children and youth, and in that spirit we offer our support in the ongoing work to revise this Plan and transform the Ministry.

Sincerely,

(signature)

Adrienne Montani
Provincial Coordinator

cc: Tom Christensen, Minister of Children and Family Development

A CONTINUUM OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

First Call's *Early Childhood Development in BC: A Framework for Action* identifies five essential components of supports and services that must be a part of the ECD continuum in order to help young children and families meet their changing and diverse needs from considering pregnancy through to children's entry into full-time school. Our goal is to have families experience the ECD supports and services as highly visible, seamless, culturally sensitive, inclusive, and affordable. The five components of a seamless continuum of services include:

- ✓ *Public Health Initiatives* such as pre-natal classes, home visits for all newborns, baby/child health clinics, and vision, hearing, dental and speech screening.
- ✓ *Family Support Programs* that provide parents and caregivers with information, learning and networking opportunities to assist and enrich their parenting.
- ✓ *High Quality Child Care Services* and other early learning programs that are play-based, rich in language and literacy opportunities, and encourage children to form positive relationships with adults and children outside their family circle.
- ✓ *Early Intervention Supports and Services* for families with children at risk of developmental delays and children with disabilities.
- ✓ *Access Strategies* that reach out to families struggling with issues such as limited income, geographic isolation, language and cultural barriers and work/family life challenges, as well as information and referral services that connect children and families to the ECD resources in their community.

You can download *Early Childhood Development in BC: A Framework for Action* from our web site at www.firstcallbc.org.