



May 6, 2015

Honourable Christy Clark
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Clark,

First Call is pleased to send you the enclosed copy of our most recent report on early childhood, *Make BC's Young Children and Families a Priority: A Call to Action*, which we hope will be helpful to government in its efforts to improve early childhood supports and services.

This report and call to action arises from the consensus of the partners in our Early Childhood Development Roundtable, who represent the broad range of early childhood sub-sectors, organizations and supporters in all their variety. It contains a vision for our children that we are eager to work towards with all our community partners and with government policy-makers. We envision a province in which the rights and well-being of all BC's young children are valued and respected in thriving families, nurturing communities and by well-resourced and comprehensive public policy.

The guiding principles and assumptions that serve as the foundation for this call to action are outlined in full on pages 4-6 of the report. All of them are important, but we would draw your attention particularly to these two assumptions, that the call to action:

- Acknowledges that governments need to take decisive action in order to meet our collective responsibilities to all families with young children, including Aboriginal families and communities. Population-wide, families with young children today are squeezed for time, incomes and/or services, and communities cannot reduce this pressure on their own. Only senior levels of government can introduce and sustain the policies and investments at the scale and scope required to significantly reverse the current trends and help young children and their families thrive. Moreover, it is senior levels of government – federal, provincial and territorial – who have assumed responsibility for advancing the rights of young children and their families, through the various UN conventions now in place.
- Affirms that we can afford to make substantial and meaningful public investments in young children and their families. The call to action draws on the overwhelming evidence showing that BC could choose to prioritize these public investments, and that doing so would provide substantial social and economic benefits throughout the province. In other words, the cost of underinvesting in families with young children today is actually higher than the public investment required to help them thrive.

Since the publication in 2003 of our original *Early Childhood Development in BC: First Call's Framework for Action* (available on our website), the research, evidence and support for policy change and public investment has grown exponentially. This new report contains a wealth of information about developments over the last decade in the areas of child rights, human development research and public

policy impacts, particularly the stellar research and analysis from the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at the University of BC.

It also presents a concise but detailed analysis of Canada's and BC's performance compared to international and provincial benchmarks of service access and quality, and of child well-being for the early years. It assesses the BC Early Years Strategy announced in 2013 and the effectiveness of current provincial early years policy and investments in this context as well.

Our assessment is that over the past decade there has been strong leadership in communities, where local service providers and leaders have worked hard to respond to the needs of families with young children. That work should be honoured, it is valued and necessary, but it is not sufficient. Local communities cannot do what needs to be done on their own.

We also conclude that over the last decade our provincial government has made some acknowledgement of the support needs of families with young children, but the response to date has failed to make substantive progress because it has been at a small scale and with an ad hoc delivery of dollars. The response has not contained the comprehensive, cross-government planning required, nor given priority to the public investments and policy changes needed to address the scale and scope of the socioeconomic realities facing the majority of families with young children today.

Our assessment of the federal government's poor performance in supporting young children and their families, also outlined in the report, will be communicated to them as well.

In light of the evidence in this report, we are calling on your government to take on the necessary leadership to make the evidence-based policy changes and substantial public investments required to make BC's young children and families a provincial priority.

We look forward to your response to this call to action and to working with government to improve the well-being of all of BC's young children.

Sincerely,



Adrienne Montani
Provincial Coordinator

Copies: All BC MLA's
First Call Coalition partner organizations (list enclosed)

Provincial and Regional Partner Organizations

ACT - Autism Community Training
 Adoptive Families Association of BC
 Affiliation of Multicultural Societies & Service Agencies
 Alternate Shelter Society
 Association for Community Education BC
 Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia
 Autism Society of BC
 Baobab Inclusive Empowerment Society
 BC Aboriginal Child Care Society
 BC Association for Child Development & Intervention
 BC Association of Family Resource Programs
 BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs
 BC Association of Social Workers
 BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
 BC Council for Families
 BC Crime Prevention Association
 BC Federation of Foster Parents Association
 BC Government & Service Employees' Union
 BC Play Therapy Association
 BC Recreation and Parks Association
 BC Retired Teachers' Association
 BC Society for Public Education
 BC Society of Transition Houses
 BC Teachers' Federation
 Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland
 Boys and Girls Clubs of BC
 Breakfast for Learning BC & Yukon
 Canadian Association for Young Children
 Canadian Federation of Students - BC
 Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division
 Canadian Red Cross – RespectEd
 Capilano Students' Union
 Caring for First Nations Children Society
 Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs
 Cerebral Palsy Association of BC
 Children's and Women's Health Centre of BC
 Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
 Columbia/Kootenay Advocacy and Education Resource Society
 Communities that Care- Squamish
 Community Action Toward Children's Health
 Council of Parent Participation Preschools BC
 Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children (CASA) of Greater Victoria Society
 Deaf Children's Society of BC
 Developmental Disabilities Association
 Dietitians of Canada, BC Region
 Directorate of Agencies for School Health BC
 Early Childhood Educators of BC
 East Kootenay Childhood Coalition

Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver
 Family Services of Greater Vancouver
 Federation of BC Youth In Care Networks
 Federation of Community Social Services of BC
 Health Officers' Council of British Columbia
 Helping Spirit Lodge Society
 Hospital Employees' Union
 Immigrant Services Society of BC
 Inclusion BC
 Justice Institute of BC
 Kamloops and District Elizabeth Fry Society
 Learning Disabilities Association of BC
 Mary Manning Centre
 McCreary Centre Society
 Métis Commission for Children and Families of B.C.
 Mom to Mom Child Poverty Initiative
 MOSAIC
 National Council of Jewish Women of Canada-Vancouver Section
 Pacific Association of First Nations Women
 Pacific Community Resources Society
 Pacific Immigrant Resources Society
 Parent Support Services Society of BC
 PeerNetBC
 Pentiction & District Community Resources Society
 Phoenix Human Services Association
 PLEA Community Services Society of BC
 Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society
 Provincial Association of Residential & Community Agencies
 Public Health Association of BC
 Single Mothers' Alliance of BC
 Social Planning & Research Council of BC
 Society for Children and Youth of BC
 S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
 Summit Negotiations Society
 Sunshine Coast Community Services Society
 Take a Hike Youth At Risk Foundation
 Toxic Free Canada
 UFV Centre for Safe Schools and Communities
 United Way of the Lower Mainland
 University Women's Club of Vancouver
 Vancity Community Foundation
 Vancouver Coastal Health Authority– Population Health
 West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund
 Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre
 Westcoast Family Centres Society
 Western Society for Children
 Women Against Violence Against Women
 YWCA Metro Vancouver