The BC Council for Families is in full support with First Call’s *Make BC’s Young Children and Families a Priority: A Call to Action*

- Families are central to promoting children’s healthy development
- Investing in early years is crucial
- In agreement with policy interventions that would make a difference
First Call’s *A Call to Action* directly correlates with findings from our recent Let’s Talk Families survey

- Our NPP and PCMGP programs are being cut back, and we hear from agencies they lack funding, support and resources to offer programs.

- In our recent survey we heard the voices of families: both statistically as well as their cries of dissatisfaction, frustration, pain, anxiety and disbelief.

- Today we are not only expressing our support, but also sharing some of our findings and voices from families surveyed.
Make BC’s young children and Families a Priority: Key Finding

Investing in Families with Young Children

“Failure to invest in families with young children imposes substantial long-term costs to our education, healthcare, social welfare and justice systems, as well as undermining economic productivity and social stability.”
Let’s Talk Families BC! Survey

Last year over 3,000 people from across BC shared their thoughts on the needs and challenges families face
Let’s Talk Families Survey

Challenges families frequently and sometimes face in BC:

• Children’s Care 69.5% (1281 Respondents, N = 1842)
• Physical health 87.5% (1625 Respondents, N = 1857)
Areas in which we can strengthen families

- Childcare
- Reducing time and income stresses
- Education
Childcare: First Call

• “Only 18% of children under 12 in BC had access to a regulated child care space.”

• “Outcome – Childcare in Canada, including BC, consistently ranks among the weakest in the industrialized world, as measured by public investment, access and quality.”
Childcare: Let’s Talk Families Survey

• A system of universally accessible, affordable childcare ranked first as an Action to Reduce Child and Family Poverty

• This was among the seven rankings First Call included in the overall survey
“Child care in our community is scarce, not affordable, not always safe or regulated and very difficult to find... I have explored all options including licensed day cares, unlicensed day cares, family day cares, nannies, babysitters, retired caregivers, school based after school care, community based before and after school centres.”
“It is next to impossible to find a licensed daycare. If your children are suffering from emotional abuse, there are no services to help them unless the abuser agrees the child can receive help.”
“The Early Childhood Tax Benefit of $55 per month is the largest financial component of the BC government’s Early Years Strategy. Yet, it does little to address our child poverty rate or, as noted earlier, alleviate the income squeeze on those families with young children, many of whom find their economic viability challenged by the cost of child care.”
Childcare Affordability: Let’s Talk Families Survey

“I can't afford to work full time and pay for after school care... Most months we are stretched to the max, working to make the paycheck last and not having to dip into the credit line... at the wages we make we are just over the income threshold for childcare supplementation.”
Reducing Time and Income Stresses: First Call

“Evidence also suggests that reducing the time and income stress on families helps to tackle the systemic pressures that are exacerbating mental health issues for many families today, issues that can lead to family breakdown and children being taken into government care.”
Reducing Time and Income Stresses: Let’s Talk Families Survey

Challenges families frequently and sometimes face in BC:

• Income 88% (1641 respondents, N = 1860)
• Jobs or employment 82% (1513 Respondents, N = 1845)
“It's the chicken or the egg argument while looking for employment. I have no $ for childcare... but I need it to secure work. Oh, now I have work but I can't afford the childcare... How is this possible?”
"I am the primary support worker for my school-aged daughter [with a disability]. I do all of her toileting, self-care, transfers... In addition to this, I maintain our house and raise a typical daughter who has activities and events. This is not considered a job... Many families do not qualify for the At Home program... but they are doing the same things as I daily.... there is a huge amount of burnout in this community."
Early Education: First Call

“Investment in early education can help to address core economic and social challenges facing Canada. It can help reduce poverty, address skills shortages, improve productivity and innovation, and a host of other national priorities.”
“UNICEF and others recommend that countries invest at least 1% of GDP in early care and education (i.e., childcare and kindergarten) for children under age six. Yet, the increased investment in kindergarten programming - the largest annual increase in funding for any BC early years service - moved BC from investing only 0.23% of GDP in early care and education to just 0.29.”
Let’s Talk Families! survey

Challenges families frequently and sometimes face in BC:

• Education 77% (1425 respondents, N = 1858)
“Should BC introduce more universal programs or more targeted programs for families with young children? We need both, and without a universal foundation, targeted programs are less effective.”
“Application of the principle of ‘proportionate universality’ helps ensure that the benefits of universal supports and services reach all children and families, including those who may experience barriers to access.”
Education: Service Accessibility
Let’s Talk Families Survey

“Special needs... are often mainstreamed into classes with other children who may be their physical age, but not their mental age. Special funding and programs that were created for special needs children in the school system has been consistently cut, reduced or given to the rest of the school's programming.”
“Our district cut another 15 minutes off the contracts of the teaching assistants... The district saved money, the assistants got a jump on rush hour traffic, and our 30 Children and Youth with Special Needs had their rights eroded... All curriculum should be accessible to all Learners.”
Education: High Service Quality First Call

“Well-trained, adequately compensated and socially valued early years staff are more likely to build respectful and trusting relationships with families and create nurturing and stimulating environments for young children.”
Education: High Service Quality
Let’s Talk Families Survey

“A fight. Exhausting. Ever changing...so, you never get the same people... While two ministries were there in body, they did not work well together... they clearly had no understanding about the complexities involved... nor did they take ownership of these issues....the list goes on.”
“We have been involved with Child and Youth Mental Health, the publicly funded addictions centre counsellors, as well as private sector counsellors... We were switched between 7 counsellors in CYMH in the 5 years we accessed them. My son no longer trusts anyone in a professional capacity...”
“The reality is that in many communities across BC there are existing services for children and youth with special needs that are already well-coordinated, yet simply under resourced. Additional funds specifically for services for children and youth with special needs in such communities would have an immediate and lasting effect.”
“They do not actually help a lot of times I know one program will get funding but the associations allocate the funds to other programs... They do not let people know what they offer and if they do the process at times is overwhelming for families. A lot of inconsistency within community services, hard to access their resources.”
“My child's disability disables me from being able to work because I am the only parent…”

“We are on welfare, it is assumed we don't work or want to work, we cannot receive child support with it benefiting the child... We may not qualify for disability assistance, but our children would if they were of age. We should be able to get disability by proxy. If a single recovering drug addict is able to get more money than a family of three, plus the ability to make more money, plus dental, why can't a family who is supporting someone with diverse needs not be given that same ability?”
Let’s Talk Families Survey: How do these groups Contribute to Family Health and Well-Being

- 51% feel that employers and businesses are doing too little (877 respondents, N = 1724)
- 85% feel that community nonprofits are doing enough and more than their fare share (1460 respondents, N = 1711)
- 84% feel that government is doing too little (1472 respondents, N = 1746)
Thank you.

Please visit our collaborative new website at: www.bccf.ca