

NEWS RELEASE

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BC Family Child Care Association

ALL DAY KINDERGARTEN

Member Concerns

Since the announcement of All Day Kindergarten by the BC Government, BC Family Child Care Association (“BCFCCA”) members have become increasingly concerned and confused about its implementation. BCFCCA requested family child care providers express their concerns in writing to provide us with information to speak on their behalf. There was consensus that the lack of community consultation, a rushed time line and the deficiency in coordination between The Ministry of Education and The Ministry of Children and Family Development, will further complicate what we believe will be a complex process. When children are cared for in quality child care and education settings, the potential to build the groundwork for healthy and positive future growth and life outcomes exists.

Family child care providers expressed their concerns about what is in the best interests of the children, will they be facing a “too much, too soon” scenario. They also wonder what assurances we have that the children’s learning will be play based and not outcome based curriculum once the program is in place for a period of time. It is critical that these early years build connections with child care providers to link child care and education. We cannot stress enough the need to validate the importance of play based Early Childhood Education. Research speaks consistently to the fact that this is how children “learn” best.

What measures will be put in place to assure that there are appropriate materials in the classroom that meet the developmental needs of the children. Will educators have sufficient funding to purchase the required materials? Questions have been asked about the level of support as it pertains to the use of the playground, the equipment and the amount of supervision required to maintain the safety of these young students during lunch hour and recess breaks. Concerns have been voiced with regards to the personal needs of children IE: napping, toileting especially with the implementation of All Day Kindergarten for 4 year old and then 3 year old children. Assurances are needed to ensure that children who need extra support will be in an environment where teachers have the skill base to modify the environment to meet the child's' needs

It is our understanding as well, that All Day Kindergarten will not be accessible for all children, it is to be phased in and there is confusion over whether or not it is mandatory for a child entering Kindergarten to in fact attend all day. Family child care operators as a small business are unable to effectively plan their services for families in the seamless manner that they deserve. The importance of choice by parents in their child care needs must be emphasized. Family child care allows the family unit in most cases to stay together, siblings

can grow up together, parents build trusting relationships with their care provider and the older children are provided with opportunities to mentor the younger children. The “seeds” of empathy are planted and nurtured and the children are well prepared to take these life skills into the Education system.

In a province that is increasingly under stress in recruitment and retention of Early Child Care Educators and with the shortage of quality child care choices for parents there is a huge potential to add to these burdens. Due to the ratios determined by the regulations limiting the number of spaces available for children under four years, many family child care centers are facing closures as they will not be able to maintain a reasonable living wage. As well, there is the potential loss of providers who may see employment in the Education system. As small business owners, who are strongly controlled by government regulations, family child care providers have no potential to grow; but they are vital members of the business community. They purchase their supplies, pay their taxes and employ staff, all of which helps the economy in their communities.

With the possible closure of many family child care centers, communities will be impacted in the following ways: fewer choices for parents in available child care spaces, children being transported to another community for available child care, fewer tax dollars being paid due to less income, fewer business licenses issued, lack of available child care spaces for children after school or on professional days, more “latch-key” children and less continuity for children in child care in the early years. We have two concerns: some providers may choose to drop their license and operate illegally (underground) in order to make a living, lowering the quality of child care in BC and making it difficult to monitor. Others may close resulting in a critical loss of infant and toddler spaces. As the economic recovery continues this could have a severe impact on the ability of parents to return to work or school as family child care is responsible for over a third of the child care spaces in BC.

BC Family Child Care Association has continuously promoted quality child care for the last 30 years, to the benefit of all children and families in the province. We look forward to working on opportunities to participate in the development of policy towards a system that builds on the expertise of child care providers that will strengthen the partnership with Education. With the recent announcement of 21st century learning and the need for flexibility it is imperative that family child care is responsive to the needs of parents, their children, their community and the province of BC.

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For more information on BC Family Child Care Association please visit our website at www.bcfcca.ca.