

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

February 21, 2005

A STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT BY THE GREATER VICTORIA
EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY COALITION

STATEMENT OF INTEREST:

WHAT THE COALITION EXPECTS FROM ITSELF AND ITS
PARTNERS IN PROMOTING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

“The federal government has publicly declared its intention to support universal day care and early childhood development. The words have been spoken, now is the time for action”

- Provide vision for the early years initiatives in Canada that is:
 - Affordable
 - Accessible
 - Inclusive
 - High Quality
 - Meets the child’s needs in the context of family, community and culture
- Take a leadership role while at the same time appreciating and understanding that local communities have the ability in identifying and meeting their children’s needs with the support of the federal government
- Recognize and promote that the mandate of the tri-level committee [Fed/Prov/Municipal leaders] is to operationalize a child first commitment for each community in the country
- Demonstrate a commitment to children being first through assuring:
 - Access to housing
 - Access to transportation
 - Access to quality nutrition
 - Access to consistent medical care and a family general practitioner

- The principal goal for the federal government should be sustainability of programs and services in the long term
- The primary outcomes of federal initiatives should be:
 - Improved well being; emotional, social and physical
 - Improvement in EDI results in communities
 - Less children living in poverty
 - More licensed childcare spaces
 - Children feel valued and cared for in their community
 - Decrease the number of children at risk
 - Legislation is in place that ensures minimum standards for children as exist for seniors [CPP/OAS]

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT:

“Making every day a good day for every child in BC”

- The Provincial government must develop a progressive plan to address issues rather than take a reactive approach to chronic issues
- The plan must articulate how to support parents in their basic needs and provide options for them [quality childcare, part time work, working at home] that values their role as parents
- Minister of State [presently Hon Linda Reid] must present the case for prevention and planning for ECD to the Minister of Children and Family Development [presently Hon Stan Hagen] in order that the government give it priority and on an equal footing as to importance with community living and child protection
- Minister of State must forge partnerships with other ministries to attach equal importance to ECD in Education and Health;
- The Provincial government must develop a detailed plan of how it intends to connect with the federal goals in ECD
- Develop a range of options for childcare that is non-stigmatizing, low cost and universal including;
 - Homecare [parents and relatives]
 - Licensed family child care
 - Family child care [non-licensed]
 - Licensed daycare
 - Care in schools

- Create a plan for communities that
 - Demonstrates that young children are a government priority in which it is prepared to invest money [recognizing the value of prevention rather than putting all resources in child protection]
 - Is visionary and flexible. In other words, create a vision that is inclusive, has a range of options, allows for choice and flexibility for parents, extends well beyond the one year parental leave and extends until kindergarten
 - Polls support amongst the general public for early learning, prevention and quality of life [housing, adequate income]
 - Designs a map of how to make communities inclusive where children and families are welcomed and children have a sense of belonging
 - Promote well being for all children and avoid just targeting problem areas
- Host a Citizen’s Assembly with the sole format being engaging communities in how to make early childhood development a priority for everyone.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

“Local governments are responsible for creating a milieu that demonstrates respect for children and welcomes them in every aspect of community life. We see a city that welcomes young people and their families as citizens”

- City of Victoria build into the Victoria Urban Agreement opportunity a priority with respect to all three levels of government – federal, provincial and municipal – collaborating to build in the well being of all young children into the plan
- In developing the plan, local government must listen to the grass roots – parents, child care operators and ECD professionals
- Explore all options of how to develop family centers using schools space, community centers and recreation facilities
- Make the downtown core including Victoria, Sidney, Brentwood Bay etc child-friendly and livable for families

- Raise the profile of children in the media and in public campaigns sponsored by local government including changing the perception that child care is babysitting
- Local municipalities together with school boards need to develop a plan that is cohesive, forward thinking and thoughtful including:
 - Clarity that early childhood development begins at birth and that local government must provide options for children and parents and a mechanism for discussion about choices
 - Partnership with schools must be careful to place attention on social development/play-centered and less on academics for young children
 - Formalize junior kindergarten for four year olds
 - Produce a booklet or information system to enable parents to get up to date information on what is available
- Develop partnerships and options through utilization of existing resources such as underused school space, neighbourhood houses, community centers, recreation facilities
- Create rational and fiscally efficient centers – family centers – attached to existing resources that have one stop shopping for services [municipal, provincial and federal]
- Offer financial support for quality universal child care by:
 - Making it a condition of the license that the centre pay a living wage to workers
 - Zone land tax exempt if property used for child care center
 - Design a way to give tax relief to not for profit child care centers

PARENTS

“Our vision is that the role of parents is valued and celebrated by government and communities and that parents are given adequate support for their children”

- Parents need a place to access resources and support including
 - An information hot line

- One place to go for information that also brings parents together in places that make sense based on the community – City versus Galiano Island
- The place should allow for contact with multiple health care professionals
- Support groups for parents
- Day care in schools where infants and toddlers interact with pupils
- Identification of child having special needs and where appropriate respite for parents requiring additional support
- Screening tool at birth
- Mental health screening and mental health funding for parents
- Parents recommend that
 - Physicians and health care workers be educated in ECD as part of their core curriculum
 - Universal education and roots of empathy programs be available to them
 - The information should include from conception to grade school
 - Access to support and outreach workers
 - A publication or short course on parenting be available
 - Begin education about parenting in high schools
 - A mechanism be in place to protect children before the need for formalized child protection including support from other parents, respite, more knowledge about toddler and pre-school behavior and a person responsible to watch over parents by having them check in

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COALITION AND SUCCESS BY SIX

“Our main thrust at this juncture is to ensure people are thinking about young children”

- The Coalition needs to commit to the following:
 - Clarify to the general public – who are we...? Using a simple message [“Bubble map”]

- Audit membership and try to engage municipal reps that are representative of all areas to be part of the Coalition
- Representatives of the Coalition attend at meetings at the municipal level
- Work with local governments to have local community plans all include ECD
- Lobby all municipalities to have ECD including in funding plans – in other words a specified budget item for children
- Make it clear to municipalities that the Coalition is the RESOURCE and the local governments have the framework [libraries, schools, recreation etc] and if working in partnership our knowledge can assist them to use their resources to the benefit of young children in a proactive and financially sound manner
- Clarify to local governments that the Coalition is committed to work with them to make and implement a specific plan for childcare using the promised federal funding
- Propose to the Provincial government that in the name of risk prevention and parents education proactively, core funding for communities through existing resources like neighbourhood houses based on the numbers of children 0 to 6 years old
- Regarding aboriginal issues:
 - Research how the Aboriginal funding piece fits and where
 - Ensure Aboriginal community represented in the municipal plans – all inclusive
- Develop a clear statement of our history, what we represent and what we want – using graphs, a binder, a video of the life of a young child, stories
- Propose to the Provincial and Federal governments to use our model for a province pilot of how to work together [Understanding the Early Years]
- Consider if working with the Federal and Municipal level of government is possible with respect to an ECD initiative [bypass province]
- Propose to the Federal government:
 - National policies for licensing for child care

- Ways to monitor how federal monies are spent at the provincial level
- Help governments conceptualize how a universal child care system works including relying on work done in countries like Sweden and Finland
- The need to develop an early years initiative that incorporates a vision for universal quality child care that is affordable, accessible and inclusive
- Establish infrastructure to support universal day care including a training institute on child care
- What the Coalition needs:
 - Ongoing core funding for the Coalition particularly for its coordinating role for task groups and local organizations
 - Recognition from the Provincial government of the value of the role of the Coalition

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QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED:

1. Where do we go from here?
2. How are we going to get there?
3. What are the barriers preventing us from moving forward?
4. Are there opportunities for regional/agency collaboration? If so, in what areas?
5. How can we build on the services and supports that currently exist? What else do we need?
6. Who is going to do what? By when? With whom?