



Early Years

WORKSHOPS & TRAINING

This letter is for anyone willing to listen and care about young children and child care workers.

As of Wednesday, March 18th 2020, child care programs across the province of BC remain open while casinos, restaurants, community programs, schools and even the border has been shut down.

Refusing to close down child care programs will have consequences and let me highlight some of those here.

Child care workers have children who are school aged. With schools and community programs closed, those care providers will not be able to work.

Child care workers have loved ones with compromised immune systems or have compromised immune systems themselves. Those workers will not want to work and should not work during a pandemic.

Let's not forget child care workers who are on the verge of retirement, in their 60s. They are also part of the at risk population and should not be forced to work.

These absences in the child care workforce will cause issues in the child to adult ratio.

The child care workforce in BC has been undervalued, underpaid and is now being asked to work through unsafe conditions. If schools have been shut down to protect the teachers and children K-12 then early years programs should be shut down also.

Refusing to shut down early years programs at this time send the message that child care workers and early years do not matter.

The reality is, social distancing is impossible in early years programs. Children do not have the developmental capacity to understand how to do social distancing. Children need connection and relationship as a base for feeling safe and enhancing healthy brain development.

This means child care workers are in constant close proximity with children to provide hugs, cuddles and feed them as it should be. Child care workers also deal with bodily fluids on a daily basis, cleaning diapers, accidents and wiping noses using universal precautions. However, these precautions are not enough to protect from COVID 19.

Another reality to consider is that parents are worried about the financial implications of not being able to work. This means parents will continue to bring their children to child care programs, on medication, with runny noses so that they can work and earn income while it is possible. Keeping child care programs open during a pandemic will definitely spread the virus.

The complexity of the situation we are in extend beyond my written words however if the primary goal for Canada and BC is to stop the spread of COVID 19 and protect the public then it is necessary to shut down early years programs immediately.

Emergency child care programs should be set up by the local health authorities to support health care workers, pharmacists and anyone who needs to work during the pandemic. The child care workers operating the emergency child care programs should be willing, able bodied and without compromised immune systems.

These workers should also be compensated more than a few dollars above minimum wage which is currently the standard pay in BC for such an 'essential service.'

Sincerely,

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