

January 30, 2020



Dear Chairperson,

As you will know, BC's Minister of Education recently hosted a very significant **Early Learning Summit**. The Summit brought together school district leaders, teachers, and representatives of child care organizations from across BC to hear the current research and evidence that demonstrates the social and financial benefits of investing in early learning, discuss school-age child care, and listen to school district/community stories.

This discussion is essential to BC's effective implementation of the \$10aDay Child Care Plan, which calls for moving provincial responsibility for child care for infants through to 12 year olds into the Ministry of Education, as it is across most of Canada. The Plan outlines how BC can bring child care to the table as a strong and equal partner with education — a key element of effective systems around the world while ensuring school districts have the mandate and resources required to new opportunities.

We are pleased to share with you the attached Policy Briefing Note which provides more detail on issues related to the move of child care (aka early childhood education) to the Ministry of Education. Should Trustees or senior management in your District be interested we'd welcome an opportunity to discuss the \$10aDay Plan with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sharon Gregson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sharon Gregson
www.10aday.ca

SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE IN SCHOOLS

It Just Makes Sense!

On November 8, 2019, BC's Minister of Education hosted a very significant **Early Learning Summit**. The Summit brought together school district leaders, teachers, and representatives from child care organizations from across BC to hear about the current research and evidence on the social and financial benefits of investing in early learning, discuss school-age child care, and listen to school district/community stories.

This discussion is essential to BC's effective implementation of the \$10aDay Child Care Plan, which calls for moving provincial responsibility for child care for infants through to 12 year olds into the Ministry of Education, as it is across most of Canada. The Plan outlines how BC can bring child care to the table as a strong and equal partner with education — a key element of effective systems around the world. **The success of this partnership depends on building a culture of respect for the professionalism of early childhood educators (ECEs), integrating early care pedagogy into the educational system starting at the primary levels and working toward parity between ECEs and teachers.**

Keynote speakers at the summit highlighted the value of integrated, inclusive, seamless approaches to care and learning during children's early years. The substantial short and long term benefits for children, families and our economy were reaffirmed yet again..

Focus then turned to the exciting **new role** that schools can and are playing in developing and delivering **school-aged care** — particularly for children in kindergarten and primary grades, with innovative examples of BC School Districts

that are already integrating early care and learning and, in some cases, employing early childhood educators in classrooms to support children's early learning.

We were particularly struck by an example of a kindergarten classroom now used to provide an integrated, seamless extended day for children from K–Grade 2. The school district is the licensed provider of the school aged child care and the early childhood educators and teachers are all employed by the school district.

As we understand it, the day begins early with a qualified ECE offering before school care for those who need it. This ECE remains in the classroom through the lunch hour, partnering with the teacher. Another ECE arrives at lunch, partners with the teacher for the 'school' afternoon and then provides after school care for families who need it until 5:30.

This is precisely the model proposed in the \$10aDay Plan for school-aged care of young children, as it has so many benefits.

- **Children** experience a seamless, integrated day without the stress of different faces and spaces;
- **Parents** are able to work a full working day, rather than a part day, without that '3 pm anxiety';
- **Early childhood educators and teachers** can deepen their professional relationship as they implement BC's new Early Learning Framework;

- **Communities** can make effective use of existing public space that is unused for much of the day;
- **Employers** have access to a larger workforce;
- **School districts** can deliver child care for an age group they already know and serve; and
- **Government** can efficiently deliver on its promise of more child care spaces.

Districts could now begin to consider using every Kindergarten classroom for before and after-school child care. And, districts that already employ early childhood educators during school hours could begin a move to an extended day including before and after school care.

Yet, the implementation of seamless school-aged care in schools is not without its challenges — most of which stem from the long-standing but false divide between early care and early learning.

Now is the time for BC to end this false divide. Working in a strong and equal partnership with the child care sector and early childhood educators, government should implement the tools and conditions that school districts need to create and operate school-aged care in every community across BC.

In addition to the affordability and workforce investment recommendations in the \$10aDay Plan, these tools include:

- A **legislated mandate** for boards of education to develop and directly deliver child care (beginning with school-age care) as part of regular school operations;
- A **simplified province-wide protocol** to enable existing Kindergarten classrooms to be used for licensed child care when the child care is delivered by the school district;
- **Direct consolidated operating funding** to school districts to operate child care programs on a par equivalent to other child care funding;

- **Workforce arrangements** that enable school districts to offer full time hours to some existing part-time employees who are qualified to provide school aged care; and
- **Design and equipment guidelines** that facilitate the full time use of public classroom space for child care.

While the emphasis at the Summit was on a **new role for school districts**, lots of child care is already located in BC schools — overwhelmingly through a landlord/tenant relationship.

Now, school districts decide whether to 'rent' space to child care programs. Some charge cost recovery rates while others use market rental rates as revenue for their districts. Some make public school space available only to non-profit organizations while others offer public space to for-profit child care businesses. As tenants, child care programs can face dislocation if school needs change. And, rental relationships do not promote integration of early care and learning.

While it doesn't build a system, co-location of existing child care in schools or on school grounds **benefits many families and must be protected**. As a new role for school districts evolves, the province should enact policy to ensure that existing child care is not dislocated from schools and establish a province-wide standardized cost recovery rental formula for non-profit child care in schools. **This, along with a separate capital child care budget in the Ministry of Education, is the way to build from the essential child care that already exists to a universal public system.**

We thank the Minister of Education for his leadership role in convening the Summit. It was an important and critical step toward BC's implementation of universal, \$10aDay child care. We look forward to working with the Ministry of Education and BC's school districts **to develop integrated seamless early care and learning for young children in our public schools**. Thousands of children, families, school communities and BC's economy stand to benefit!