



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Honourable John Horgan, MLA
Premier of British Columbia
West Annex
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8V 1X4

June 1, 2020

Dear Premier:

On behalf of the BC Liberal Official Opposition, I am writing to you about the critical area of child care which intersects the social and economic life of our province.

There has been much confusion in policy, as children in schools were ordered home, but children in child care centres were not. Citizens were told to physically distance, but many child care workers were told *not* to do so. Providers had to make a difficult choice — remain open to serve the children of essential service workers, or possibly lose their livelihood if they closed.

Many child care providers anticipate closing permanently due to the lack of government support in recent months. Rowena, for example, receives the Temporary Emergency Funding of \$800 per month, when her monthly mortgage alone is \$3,600. The spaces that she maintains, and many like them, may well disappear as her business cannot be sustained.

To ensure the health of children in licensed care, the health of providers and Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), and the health of our overall child care system, we propose that your government:

- Clarify the risk that parents and children, providers and ECEs, are undertaking when they return;
- Clearly define what is meant by a daily ‘screening’ of children, and assure providers that they can require a COVID-19 test of any child or worker as a condition of entry;
- Establish a ‘Provider Guarantee’ which will ensure that no provider is forced into insolvency as a result of COVID-19;
- Make personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies part of the ongoing basic Child Care Operating Fund program, including simple diagnostic tools such as thermometers; and
- Publish a comprehensive report on the state of the system, including the numbers of spaces and providers lost, program saving or extra costs, the numbers of centres and spaces open and closed, and the number of children attending versus enrolled during the crisis.

In the February 2018 budget, the government promised to create 24,000 new, incremental child care spaces within three years. However, just 2,400 functioning spaces were created under the New Spaces Fund before the crisis.

Parents want to know if the government’s plan to meet their needs for child care have changed. We look forward to a clear statement of the government’s future agenda for child care, along with the

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number of net new child care spaces created since February 2018 and projected to the end of March 2021.

Together we have worked hard to contain the COVID-19 virus compared to other provinces and countries. Now it is up to the government to consolidate our gains and limit the enormous social and economic damage caused by strong containment measures.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Wilkinson".

Andrew Wilkinson, Q.C.

MLA Leader of the Official Opposition