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September 8, 2003

Mr. Richard Dupuis, Clerk  
Standing Committee on Finance  
Room 673, Wellington Building  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

E-mail: fina@parl.gc.ca

Dear Mr. Dupuis:

**RE: 2003 Federal Pre-Budget Consultation: Child Care in the City of Vancouver**

On behalf of the City of Vancouver, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the 2003 pre-budget consultation. While this brief deals specifically with child care, the City of Vancouver also believes that additional federal investment is required in affordable housing and other social and structural infrastructure at the municipal level.

The City of Vancouver is home to 545,671 (2001 Census) residents, of which approximately 62,600 are children between the ages of birth to 12 years of age. Currently, in Vancouver there are about 6,800 full-time licensed child care spaces and the potential to serve 5,200 children in licensed preschool. Overall estimates suggest that if 50% of the children required full time care, the existing programs could serve about 15% to 20% of the need (providing service that's affordable and accessible to families).

In addition, 49.5% of Vancouver's population have languages other than English as their mother tongue; many of these residents have children who will benefit from high quality early childhood experiences, prior to school entry. Moreover, Vancouver is home to some of the poorest children in the country (Vancouver has the highest proportion (24.6%) of families in the country with incomes below the "low income cut-off"). For these children, quality early childhood experiences are essential to provide early intervention and school readiness opportunities.

Child care costs in Vancouver are among the highest in the country, with parents paying about 80% of the cost. The mean monthly child care fee for infant is \$905 and for a 3 to 5 year old it is \$537. The provincial government's contribution has been decreasing for the past three years and will likely continue to decrease. Since 2000, approximately \$50M has been cut from child care, either in direct operating dollars, staff wages and/or subsidies to families. While the City of Vancouver has been a national leader in providing facilities, operating subsidies and planning supports, it has seen a growing trend toward quality licensed care for children whose parents can afford it and unregulated care for those who cannot. This is occurring at a time when there is overwhelming research that demonstrates the importance of early childhood development opportunities and the benefits of quality childcare. This is also counter productive to the Federal government's efforts to provide funding to enhance both ECD and childcare.

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In response to the House of Commons Standing Committee's invitation to participate in the pre-budget 2003 consultation, the City of Vancouver would like to emphasize the importance of a high quality, accessible and affordable child care system that is well funded by all levels. Vancouver supports the three themes set out for consideration by the committee.

- Child care supports economic growth and labour force participation,
- Child care invests in the care and development of young children, and
- Child care supports healthy societies and communities.

The City of Vancouver calls on the Federal government to continue to take a leadership role in early childhood development and child care and strengthen its commitment to funding the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care. We encourage you to continue to build social policy that eliminates the division between child care and early childhood development and support a holistic and integrated approach.

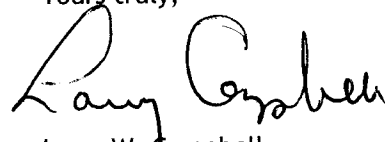
Council also emphasizes the need for the Federal government to implement stringent measures of accountability for federal funds to ensure that there is adherence to the Framework's spirit and principles, which promote and increase the affordability and availability of regulated child care to all families. In British Columbia, we have seen a significant deterioration of the child care system and questionable use of the federal funds from both the ECDI and the Multilateral Framework for Child Care. Child care should be viewed as a primary cornerstone to early childhood development and funding should be allocated accordingly to the regulated child care sector; thus building on existing services. Federal funding must not offset provincial cuts or refocusing of funding from child care.

As the Federal government considers its budget allocations, we specifically request:

- a significant allocation to regulated child care, given that a number of reports suggest at least \$1billion is required to begin to build a national system;
- strong measures of accountability to ensure funding builds on affordability and accessibility of child care and does not replace existing provincial funds; and
- transparent reporting of how provinces spend federal funds in relation to provincial expenditures for child care.

On behalf of Vancouver's children and families, we ask you to show your commitment to building a publicly funded child care system in partnership with the Province of British Columbia and the City of Vancouver.

Yours truly,



Larry W. Campbell  
MAYOR