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Child Care and the Economic Crisis

In response to the global economic crisis, governments at all levels are looking to invest in public infrastructure as a way to stimulate the economy.

However, child care is not yet considered part of these economic stimulus packages. For example, the BC Ministry of Education recently acknowledged that building a new system of early care and learning is a big undertaking. They indicated that, due to uncertain economic times and declining provincial revenue projections, the introduction of All Day Kindergarten may be delayed.

To set the record straight:

- It is no surprise that extending universal, publicly funded services to young children is a big undertaking – particularly given the current low level of Canada's investment in young children relative to other countries.¹
- Despite 4 years of large provincial surpluses² that could have been invested in building a quality child care and early learning system, and despite the documented lack of access to those services, BC chose other priorities.
- Now, governments across the world, recognize that they have a key role to play in stimulating the economy through investments in public infrastructure.
- Like other public spending, **investment in early care and learning services will stimulate the local economy** by creating jobs traditionally done by men (construction) and by women (early childhood education) and by reducing families' child care costs so that they have funds to meet other pressing needs.
- Investing in young children has significant **additional benefits** compared to other public spending including healthy childhood development, family support, mothers' labour force attachment, poverty reduction, and social inclusion.
- During difficult times, the need to support families so they can work or go to school and to collectively ameliorate the developmental impact of reduced family income and increased stress on young children is more important than ever.

BC still needs universal, publicly funded services that meet the developmental needs of children and working families and build on community strengths.

Public investment in quality child care and learning services is the best infrastructure investment BC could make.

¹ Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) (2006). *Early learning and childcare: How does Canada measure up?* Child Care Briefing Notes.

² http://www.fin.gc.ca/frt/2008/frt08_5e.html#26