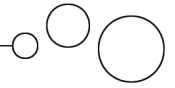


COALITION OF

child care advocates

OF BC



Working together for a community based, non-profit child care system that is high quality, affordable, accessible, publicly funded and accountable.

October 16th, 2010

President Stephen Toope
University of British Columbia
Office of the President
6328 Memorial Road
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

Dear President Toope,

We are writing to express our alarm and concern that the University of British Columbia has entered into a contract with **Kids and Company** to provide off-campus child care services for the UBC community. While we understand that the demand for child care continues to outpace the significant growth of UBC's own services, we urge you to consider the long-term ramifications of the decision you have made to financially support and, in essence, promote the expansion of commercial child care in BC.

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC is a voluntary organization of interested citizens – parents, child care providers and community activists – working together for a publicly funded, community-owned child care system that is high quality, affordable and accessible. As such, we speak out on issues that negatively impact the potential to build such a system of early care and learning in BC.

We are aware that UBC is the largest provider of campus-based child care in North America. By committing to 1,000 new non-profit spaces over the next five years, your university is a strong leader in child care vision and development. Your support for child care services sends an important message across BC and beyond that learning is life long and that the success of future post-secondary students rests, to a large degree, on the quality of their experiences in the early years.

In the face of this proud history and your University's leading role in academic research into early child development, surely it is incongruous to be the first University to welcome big box, corporate child care chains into BC.

We know that responsibility for the child care crisis at the University of British Columbia and across the province rests squarely with senior levels of government. Multiple international reports condemn Canada's minimal public investment in child care services, leaving us with high parent fees, inconsistent quality and the lowest access to regulated spaces among developed countries. Despite the urgent need for more public investment, in recent years both the federal and provincial governments have cut child care funding and neither have plans for or commitment to solving the resulting crisis.

In the face of government inaction, the 'too good to be true' proposal from **Kids and Company** may seem attractive. However, a substantial body of evidence and the lived experience of families and child care providers clearly demonstrate that big box commercial child care is **not** the solution.

It is well documented that the prevalence of commercial, for-profit child care chains is associated with higher parent fees and lower overall access. In addition, the pressure for profits inevitably results in downward pressure on staff wages and working conditions and/or demands for less regulation, both of which compromise quality of services. Yet, it is quality child care, as demonstrated on campus at UBC, that makes the difference: good quality promotes healthy child development, but poor quality does harm.

The good news is that there are solutions to the child care crisis at your University and across British Columbia. Most other developed nations have built high quality, universal systems of early care and learning and, with the help and support of institutions like the University of BC, we can do it too. Working in partnership with the Early Childhood Educators of BC, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC has developed the enclosed *Emerging Plan for an Integrated System of Early Care and Learning* that offers an innovative approach to meeting the needs of BC children, families and communities. We encourage you to consider supporting this plan and would be pleased to brief you and your executive team on it.

In closing, President Toope, we are sure that you would not consider contracting out your teaching responsibilities to a commercial college chain so we urge you and the Board of Governors to reject big box child care chain options and instead:

- Continue your policies that recognize the importance of on-site, quality, non-profit child care in a strong and vibrant university community.
- Join with the community in advocating for adequate public funds from the province to build and sustain quality child care services.
- Work with your existing on-site unionized child care providers, parents, faculty, staff and Vancouver's larger child care community to build on the strengths of what already exists.

Please work with us to encourage the provincial and federal governments to invest in high quality, publicly funded, non-profit child care that benefits children, families and communities.

Sincerely,



Susan Harney
Chair, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

cc. Hon. Gordon Campbell, Premier, Vancouver-Point Grey MLA
Carole James, Leader of the Official Opposition
Mable Elmore, Deputy Opposition Critic for Children, Family Development and Child Care
Hon. Colin Hanson, Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier
Hon. Margaret MacDiarmid, Minister of Education, Early Learning and Literacy
Hon. Mary Polak, Minister of Children and Family Development, Responsible for Child Care
Darcelle Cottons, Director, UBC Child Care Services
Brian Sullivan, Vice President, Students
Lisa Castle, Associate Vice President, UBC Human Resources