



September 7, 2017

Hon. Katrine Conroy,
Minister of Children & Family Development;

And

Hon. Katrina Chen,
Minister of State for Child Care,
PO Box 9057, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Ministers,

I wish to congratulate you both, to wish you every success and to offer our full support as you lead these two challenging but critically important portfolios.

About us: As a provincial federation, [Inclusion BC](#)'s members include people with intellectual disabilities, families of children with special needs and 70 community agencies that deliver child, youth and adult services across the province. Since 1955, we have worked to advance rights, promote abilities and build awareness, investing in collaborative partnerships to advance our vision of a province where we all belong.

The Issue: I am also writing to request a meeting at your earliest possible convenience to discuss urgent gaps in the provincial Aboriginal Supported Child Development and Supported Child Development programs. In a provincial context of challenging child care access, inadequate SCD/ACSD funding poses a significant added barrier that is denying thousands of BC children with special needs from accessing available child care spaces.

Background: Current challenges facing BC families who need critical Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) services for children with special needs were described in a [November 2016 report](#). In January 2017, our follow-up report, [Kids Can't Wait: The Case for Investing in Early Childhood Intervention Programs in BC](#), summarised service delivery challenges and proposed solutions, based on advice from over 100 ECI professionals working around the province. In July 2017, the [Provincial ASCD Advisor issued a detailed report and data analysis](#) documenting the extent of SCD/ASCD waitlists, along with program strengths and examples of best practices from BC's front line community service providers.

We welcomed MCFD's initial steps to address these challenges via a modest funding lift for foundation programs such as SCD/ASCD in Budget 2017, and subsequent outreach to our Kids Can't Wait Steering Committee in July 2017 by Aleksandra Stevanovic, Executive Director for CYSN policy. However, the response to date has not mitigated severe waitlists and wait times for vulnerable children who cannot access child care without the extra supports funded through SCD/ASCD, especially in the Lower Mainland/Vancouver Coastal area.

Current status: Reports from partner agencies show 399 children are currently waiting for SCD services in the City of Vancouver alone. Another 77 are waiting in Burnaby and 116 in Langley. Richmond and the North Shore face similar waitlists. These figures don't include children waiting for SCD/ACSD consultations or those receiving reduced service hours to enable providers to provide at least minimal access to the greatest possible number of children.

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Action requested: Inclusion BC, our members and partners in the Kids Can't Wait initiative appreciate your government's 2017 election commitment to invest in increased budgets for children and youth with special needs. We have identified an immediate investment to address ASCD/SCD waitlists as the priority for action and look forward to meeting and working with you and your staff to advance this.

The recent work undertaken by our community and provincial staff, as outlined above, provides an excellent basis for taking focussed action that will have an immediate and significant impact on the lives of some of our province's most vulnerable children and their families, with significant lifelong benefits.

We also recommend that you establish a joint working committee of ministry staff and community agency representatives to work collaboratively to develop and implement an effective response that allows agencies to leverage provincial investments to the greatest impact. This joint group would also work collaboratively on data requirements to support effective policy development, investment targeting and service delivery to achieve the best outcomes for children and youth with special needs.

I look forward to discussing this further and wish to assure you of our full support in working on solutions,

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Faith Bodnar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Faith Bodnar, Executive Director

