

January 13, 2023



Hon. David Eby, Premier
Via email only: premier@gov.bc.ca
Hon. Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development
Via email only: MCF.Minister@gov.bc.ca

RE: November 25, 2022 Announcement on the CYSN Framework and the Mandate Letter issued to Minister Dean on December 7, 2022

Dear Premier Eby and Minister Dean,

We (the undersigned) are writing collectively to further the next steps that are required to co-create and co-develop a transformed service framework for all children and youth with disabilities and complex needs in British Columbia.

We are made up of 15 BC-based organizations and experts with experience supporting tens of thousands of children and youth with disabilities and complex needs. We are a diverse group, including members with distinctions, and we recognize that Indigenous governments and peoples have specific and distinct roles, responsibilities, and rights.

The Mandate Letter to Minister Dean on December 7 confirms that deeper engagement must take place regarding changes to services for children and youth with disabilities and support needs. We support this direction. We also support the following commitments announced on November 25, 2022:

- The maintenance of individualized funding for those with an autism diagnosis even after 2025, including those who are diagnosed in the future.
- An engagement process co-designed by First Nations leadership and leaders from the disability community, in partnership with government.
- A pause on the rollout of B.C.'s plan to establish a network of family connection centres, with the exception of the four pilots to be launched. The four pilots will be evaluated during the process.
- New investments in the interim, as the new system is being developed to support children with disabilities and support needs that are currently underserved, including fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (known as FASD), Down syndrome and other neuro-cognitive developmental disabilities.

As a first step in implementing these commitments, we are writing to begin the process of deeper engagement by defining a consultative process that is principled, inclusive, respectful, evidence-based, trust-based, and transparent. We believe that we must co-design a transformed service delivery system in

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partnership with your government and that some of the critical elements that should be part of that process include:

- The immediate implementation of new interim investments for families of children with disabilities and support needs that currently lack any or adequate access to support. Interim investments must be rapidly accessible to families so they can choose the most meaningful supports that have a tangible value for their children and do not have to wait for the outcomes of the larger consultative process.
- A long-term financial commitment for increased base funding and establishing a needs-based funding model to ensure the system has adequate resources in the future. Please note that while we welcome opportunities for end-of-year funding to alleviate some of the system's most pressing inadequacies, we do not consider end-of-year funding to be an adequate lasting investment.
- The early identification of critical medical/therapeutic and human rights/legal standards to transform services for children and youth with support needs.
- Using a rights-based lens to guide decisions on both interim funding and future state planning.
- Clear, multiple, and meaningful opportunities throughout all stages of the process for parents, families, and service providers to make their views and perspectives known and to receive full information about what steps are being taken and what planning is underway.
- As required, distinct steps and processes with Indigenous governments and peoples to meet the requirements of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982.
- The involvement of researchers and other experts to ensure that the components of the transformed framework are evidence-based and subject to appropriate outcome evaluation.
- The joint evaluation of existing programs and services, including the pilot Family Connection Centres, which are not guaranteed to continue.
- Using trusted facilitators to help maintain respect, cooperation, and trust for all participants.

As a first step, we propose a roundtable dialogue as soon as possible to discuss interim supports and a design process to co-develop a transformed service framework based on the principles of flexibility, choice, equity, access, cultural

safety, trauma-informed practices, empowerment, and dignity. Participants in the roundtable would be yourselves, your senior officials, representatives from the Premier's office, our organizations and experts, the Representative for Children and Youth, the Chair of the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth and other relevant organizations or experts we may jointly identify. The roundtable's goal would be to map out a vision for the new engagement process, which departs from recent, limited consultative patterns and processes. Our stated expectations are to ensure that both the process and substance of the changes are not a source of fear and anxiety for children, parents, and service providers and that every child, treated as an individual and with dignity, has their needs funded and met.

We look forward to hearing from you in response to this letter regarding immediate action on your promise of new interim investments and planning a roundtable meeting.

Respectfully,

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