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November 5, 2009

David Turpin
President and Vice-Chancellor
Office of the President
University of Victoria
Administrative Services Building Room A220
PO Box 1700 STN CSC
Victoria BC V8W 2Y2

Dear Dr. Turpin,

I am writing you to share my concern regarding consideration by the Board of Governors of the University of Victoria of contracting campus child care services with the national corporate child care chain "Kids and Company" as part of a strategy to relieve the critical shortage of quality, affordable childcare for UVic students, faculty and staff.

The current shortage of quality, affordable child care spaces at the University of Victoria is part of a larger systemic child care crisis across British Columbia. The provincial government's failure to provide adequate, stable funding for child care operators act as a deterrent for new caregivers to consider opening or expanding existing centres. B.C. parents pay fees that are very high on the national scale, wait lists in the capital region and other areas of the province are in many cases years long and maintaining high standards of quality is harder for operators to fund than ever before.

However, the recent report under consideration by the UVic's Board of Governors to pursue a corporate childcare model is not the solution. It may serve as a temporary expedient but it will not adequately meet the need for long-term quality and accessibility for students, faculty and staff with infants, toddlers and young children. There is mounting evidence that this style of "Big Box" for-profit childcare does not provide quality childcare, nor is it cost-effective in the long run.

In countries such as Australia where similar commercial childcare centres are operating, reports suggest that standards have dropped and learning in early childhood has suffered. Corporate childcare has an interest in serving shareholders wanting dividends and a return on their investment. To achieve their business goals of profitability a number of financial pressures are placed on the service. This has caused parent fees to be frequently raised, staff wages and working conditions kept low, quality of education materials and activities diminished, while creating an interest group that demands less regulation and removal of restrictions on fees.

From my review of their child care business model, Kids and Company typically includes a manager with ECE credentials, but not staff members. This can possibly prohibit children with disabilities from accessing the service. It also reduces likelihood of detection of early symptoms of “invisible” disabilities by formally trained childcare staff.

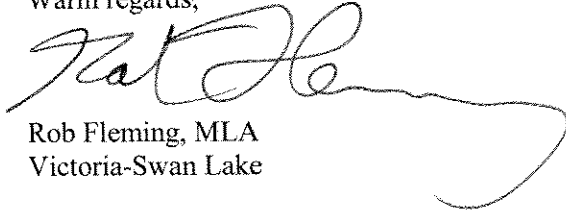
It's also worth noting that a number of reports from parents with children enrolled in Kids and Company centres in other Canadian cities have expressed dissatisfaction.

The UVic childcare system is consistently regarded as among the best in the Capital Region. It therefore makes sense to look at expanding the current model as the best solution to your institution's childcare crisis. The University of British Columbia (UBC) opened five new non-profit daycare facilities this year and have plans for even more in the near future.

It is my sincere hope that the University's Board of Governors will consider investing in affordable, accessible and quality daycare that meets the needs of members of the UVic community rather than outsourcing this service to an unprecedented and controversial entity. I hope that the BoG will carefully weigh all options and invest in quality child care that puts the needs of children, families and our community first.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Warm regards,



Rob Fleming, MLA
Victoria-Swan Lake

cc. Ray Protti, Chair of University of Victoria Board of Governors
UVic Childcare Action Group
UVic Graduate Students' Society
UVic Students' Society
CUPE Local 951
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Mary Polak, Minister of Children and Family Development
Mabel Elmore, Official Opposition Deputy Children and Family Development Critic
South Island MLAs