

Every Kid in Our Communities.....



Leeds and Grenville

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May 25, 2011

Hon. Laurel Broten

Minister of Children and Youth Services
14th Flr
56 Wellesley St W
Toronto ON M5S2S3

Dear Minister:

We, the collective co-chairs of the children's planning groups of Leeds and Grenville are sending this letter in response to our concern regarding the planned reduction of funding support for the Best Start Community Planner position in our community.

First we wish to express our appreciation of the needs of the aboriginal communities across the province and we applaud efforts to provide further supports that will be of benefit for those families and children. Our concern regarding the funding shift is in no way meant to imply a disinterest or disrespect of the magnitude of difficulties experienced by this population.

What is of concern to us is that these funds are being skimmed off an already strained and very critical service, leaving Ministry identified priorities for community planning and service integration in a weakened position that will substantially affect forward movement as planned.

Here in Leeds Grenville we have historically had much difficulty managing service collaboration due to both the structure of supports and the complicating geography. The Best Start focus has been instrumental in bringing together the minds and spirit of children's service providers but our work has really just begun as we move into the challenges of implementing the next stages of collaborative response such as the design of the Family and Children Centers as identified in Early Learning Framework.

While we as co-chairs from different children's service backgrounds do our part to support the planning tables and initiatives, as do all of the members, we still represent differing priorities and limitations due to the demands on each of us within our organizations. The position of the Community Planner is critical to the continued momentum of progress within each of these projects and to the constant re-focusing that is required, away from our specialties and back to the holistic view of collaboration. Without this essential leadership we would not have accomplished what has been achieved to date such as the Children's Screening Program, the Special Needs Resource Advisory Committee for Early Learning Programs, the 18 month well-baby strategy, community planning using EDI and other data and the Service Integration Standards that we have established.

We find ourselves at a critical point of collaborative development as we move ahead with the project of designing and supporting Family and Children Centers, supporting childcare through their metamorphosis to preschool programming only, supporting the shift of childcare responsibility to

the Ministry of Education. The reduction of essential leadership at this time will directly impact our ability to respond to these directives for community development.

We ask you to consider an alternative to the reduction of Leadership Planning funding and thus reiterate the ministry's priority of collaborative planning and service by continuing to support this vision with the funding commitment that it requires.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Harold Hess Co-Chair
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Keith McPhee, Co-Chair
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