



January 15, 2021

Hon. Jennifer Whiteside  
Minister of Education  
Parliament Buildings Rm 123  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Hon. Mitzi Dean  
Minister of Children and Family Development  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Hon. Katrina Chen  
Minister of State for Childcare  
PO Box 9057 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Ministers,

**RE: District Early Learning Centres – Fernie/Elkford (Cranbrook/Sparwood-Phase 2)**

In conjunction with the expansions to Isabella Dicken Elementary School (project 12778), there is a glorious opportunity to renovate an existing district facility of 260 m<sup>2</sup> on School Board property that is adjacent to both Isabella Dicken Elementary School and Fernie Secondary School creating new day care and before and after school care.

The renovated building would become an Early Learning Centre providing space for Strong Start, day care, before and after school care, alleviating the portable accommodating approximately 260 registered Strong Starters and providing new childcare space.

The facility to be renovated currently has an area being used by a local society offering playschool, three areas occasionally used by district staff, a technology space, and a meeting area.

We will operate the Early Learning Centre directly incorporating suggestions of the *seamless day* model prepared by CUPE Nation Research and in conjunction with our local Teacher's Association. Consideration will be given to partnerships with licensed operators to benefit young families.

The Early Learning Centre with Strong Start, day care (types to be determined), before and after school care, will serve children with diverse needs and Indigenous families, all offered during and outside regular school hours.

Also, it is the Boards desire to pursue an Early Learning Centre in Elkford with a modular unit on school property located between Rocky Mountain Elementary and Elkford Secondary School.

Frank Lento (Chair)\*Trina Ayling\*Bev Bellina\*Krista Damstrom\*Chris Johns  
\*Kathryn Kitt\*Doug McPhee\*Wendy Turner\*Patricia Whalen

As a District located entirely within the Columbia Basin, we are confident and committed to offering child care programming at the landmark \$10.00 per day rate pending the approval of Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF), Eligible Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI) and any other programs of financial assistance that are available and relevant.

We would like the renovations to start July 1, 2021 and be completed by August 31, 2021 in order to celebrate the beginning of the 2021/2022 school year in September.

Our request, Honourable Ministers, is that you find a way to provide the maximum funding available for the renovations and the development of the Early Learning Centre in addition to any financial support available from the Child Care Rapid Renovation Fund and the Child Care BC New Spaces Program.

We would also like to advise that we are in the process of directly operating similar early learning programs in our other communities of Cranbrook and Sparwood (Phase 2). We are committed to providing these programs that meet our young families and employees needs in these communities commencing the 2022/2023 school year and look forward to your assistance.

Thank you, Honourable Ministers, for your consideration for your anticipated guidance and ultimately for any funding available.

“Being the best at doing the most for students and their families.”

Sincerely,



Frank Lento, Board Chair  
School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay)

cc: SD5 Trustees  
Silke Yardley, Superintendent  
Alan Rice, Secretary Treasurer

Frank Lento (Chair)\*Trina Ayling\*Bev Bellina\*Krista Damstrom\*Chris Johns  
\*Kathryn Kitt\*Doug McPhee\*Wendy Turner\*Patricia Whalen