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NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Children and Family Development

Provincial Office for the Early Years launched

VANCOUVER – The new Provincial Office for the Early Years will focus on the needs of families with children up to age six and help ensure they have easy access to a range of early-years services no matter where they live in B.C., announced Minister of Children and Family Development Stephanie Cadieux at the UBC Early Years Conference in Vancouver.

The office, housed within the ministry, will:

- Ensure that services across government and across B.C. are co-ordinated and effective.
- Focus on consulting with parents and service providers throughout the province to determine how best to meet the needs of families.
- Oversee early-years programs and services, including leading inter-ministry partnerships and co-ordinating cross-ministry service improvements.
- Lead the implementation of a network of early-years centres, which will offer parents and families one-stop convenient access to a range of practical advice, supports and services.

The Provincial Office for the Early Years is the foundation of the B.C. Early Years Strategy, announced in February 2013. The Early Years Strategy is an eight-year government commitment to improve the accessibility, affordability and quality of early-years programs and services for families with young children.

Government has committed \$76 million to support the first three years of the strategy, including \$32 million to support the creation of up to 2,000 new licensed child-care spaces.

The strategy also includes a new BC Early Childhood Tax Benefit. Starting in April 2015, the benefit will provide \$146 million annually to approximately 180,000 families with children under the age of six (up to \$55 a month per child). In order to receive this benefit, parents must file their 2013 personal income tax returns and apply for the Canada Child Tax Benefit.

Quotes:

Stephanie Cadieux, Minister of Children and Family Development –

“We want to make life easier for families and setting up the Provincial Office for the Early Years is an

important first step in reaching this goal. Ultimately, the work the office does will provide parents with one-stop convenient access to range of practical advice, supports and services for their young children.”

Wayne Robertson, chair, Provincial Child Care Council –

“The Provincial Office for the Early Years has the potential to make an important difference in ensuring that services for children and families in British Columbia are the best they can be. The implementation of early years centres and the addition of new child-care spaces are particularly welcome.”

Quick Facts:

- The B.C. Early Years Strategy builds on the \$1 billion per year government spends on early learning and childhood development initiatives, services and supports, such as:
 - Programs that support healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy.
 - Early childhood development care and learning program investments, including public health nursing, Ready, Set, Learn programs and StrongStart BC early learning programs.
 - Full-day kindergarten.
 - Success by 6®, Children First and Aboriginal early childhood development programs.
 - A variety of programs, services and supports to address the specific needs of children and youth with special needs.
- The Ministry of Children and Family Development invests \$290 million on child care, a 37 per cent increase since 2000-01.
- More than 104,000 licensed child-care spaces are funded in communities throughout B.C.

Learn More:

To learn more about the current range of early years services in B.C. and the strategy to make programs and services more integrated, accessible, affordable and higher quality, read the B.C. Early Years Strategy:

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_childhood/pdf/FamiliesAgenda_EarlyYearsStrategy_web.pdf

For more information on early childhood development programs funded through the Ministry of Children and Family Development, please visit: www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_childhood/index.htm

For more information on Early Learning programs through the Ministry of Education, such as full-day kindergarten and StrongStart BC, please visit: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/

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