



DOWN SYNDROME BC

downsyndromebc.ca | hello@downsyndromebc.ca | [@downsyndromebc](https://www.instagram.com/downsyndromebc)

January 19, 2023

The Honourable David Eby, K.C.
Premier
Via email: premier@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Mitzi Dean
Minister of Children and Family Development
Via email: MCF.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Premier Eby and Minister Dean,

We are writing with concern regarding [news of the closure of Starbright Children's Development Centre in Kelowna](#).

In your [Nov 25 2022 press release](#), you committed to “New investments in the interim” and although you remained committed to the rollout of the pilot hubs, there was no mention of termination of any existing resources. While we wait for the promised investments, we are instead witnessing an unexpected reduction in choice of service through the closure of Starbright. Proceeding in this manner does not build trust between families of disabled children and the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Starbright executive director Rhonda Nelson, quoted in the above linked article, is correct in her assessment that “The definition of pilot does not mean that you destroy what currently exists and put something else in place just to see if it works. A pilot should be something in addition to what currently exists to see if there is a better way of doing it.”

The Ministry of Children and Family Development should not be cannibalizing existing resources to fund their test case Hubs.



On your [Family Connections Centre website](#), you indicate that families in pilot areas can choose to maintain their individualized funding or receive service through a pilot hub, and will be offered [information sessions](#) regarding their choices. Why are families who depend on other existing MCFD-funded resources, such as Starbright, not being offered transparent information and dignity of choice?

Many children with Down syndrome do not have access to any individualized funding program and will be hurt by a loss of any existing therapeutic relationships offered through current support channels. This could be remedied by a commitment to keep all existing supports running until the new framework is developed through proper consultation with stakeholders and by **immediately extending individualized funding to children with Down syndrome** so that parents and caregivers can seek out the right services and service providers for their child and family.

Support services for disabled children should not be sacrificed as part of a yet-to-be tested framework, which you have already acknowledged lacked proper consultation with stakeholders.

Sincerely,

Tamara Taggart
President, Down Syndrome BC

Rebecca Rubenstein
Vice President, Down Syndrome BC

CC:

Kevin Falcon
Leader of the Opposition
Via email: Kevin.Falcon.MLA@leg.bc.ca

MLA Karin Kirkpatrick
Official Opposition Shadow Critic for Housing and Childcare
Via email: Karin.Kirkpatrick.MLA@leg.bc.ca

MLA Norm Letnick, Kelowna-Lake Country
Shadow Minister for Children and Family Development
Via email: Norm.Letnick.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Allison Bond
Deputy Minister of Children and Family Development
Via email: mcf.deputyminister@gov.bc.ca