

March 27, 2006

Ref: 151724

Sheila Durnford
President
British Columbia Federation of
Foster Parent Associations
200 – 7342 Winston St
Burnaby BC V5A 2H1

Dear Ms. Durnford:

I am pleased to advise you that in this year's provincial budget, the Ministry of Children and Family Development was allocated new funding to support foster parents.

Over the last year, I met with a number of foster parents as I traveled throughout the province, and have gained a greater understanding and appreciation of the exceptional service they provide in caring for children and youth. During meetings with the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents and the British Columbia Federation of Foster Parent Associations and through discussions and correspondence with foster parents, I heard the concerns that were raised about supports for foster parents, and the need to review some of the costs that they incur as foster parents.

As a result of a resolution passed at the annual meeting of the British Columbia Federation of Foster Parent Associations last June, the ministry undertook a review of the maintenance and mileage rates for foster parents. Your organization and the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents provided valuable consultation to ministry staff completing the financial and policy analysis. This analysis concluded that the amount paid per kilometer should be raised to reflect the increase in transportation costs.

Therefore, effective April 1, 2006, the mileage rate is being raised to \$0.30 per kilometer. In addition to the increased mileage rate, the current kilometer cap of 370 kilometers that is built into the monthly family care rate is being decreased to 325 kilometers. From now on, the mileage rate will be calculated at \$0.30 per kilometer across the board. In all other aspects, the travel reimbursement policy for foster parents remains the same. In situations where foster parents are required to travel more than 325 kilometers per month for child-related responsibilities, and they have spent all of the monthly family care rate, the foster parent is eligible for a one-time only or exceptional on-going payment to cover the additional mileage at \$0.30 per kilometer.

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In addition to the increase in the mileage rate, funding has also been allocated this year to boost training and support for foster parents and to increase the discretionary funds available to social workers for one-time or unusual expenses related to a child's care.

The mileage increase for foster parents, additional funding to enhance foster parent training and support, and the increased funding for children and youth in care recognizes the representations the Federation has made over the past 6 months. The concerns you raised on behalf of all foster parents have been heard. I am sending a letter to all foster parents but I would also appreciate your advising your Board and membership.

At this time the family care maintenance rate is not being changed but we will continue to monitor the rate as part of the ministry's continued commitment to ensure that foster parents are properly compensated for the costs of raising a child or youth placed with them. Although British Columbia's foster home rates remain among the highest in Canada, there are situations where costs exceed the monthly rate. It remains the ministry's policy that foster parents will be reimbursed for costs in excess of the monthly rate, if those costs are related to a child's care. Foster parents should not have to use personal money in caring for a child placed by the ministry.

Over the next year the ministry will be examining all aspects of the foster home program. The participation of your organization is a critical component of this project and we look forward to working in partnership with you on foster parent recruitment and retention, enhancements to the British Columbia Foster Parent Education program and the implementation of new ministry standards and policy for resource workers and members of the child's care team.

Once again, thank you for your continued support of foster parents across the province and for your collaborative and positive working relationship with the ministry.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Stanley B. Hagen
Minister