His Worship Fred Eisenberger
Mayor of Hamilton
230–77 James Street North
Hamilton, Ontario
L8R 2K3

Dear Mayor Eisenberger:

Thank you for your letter of October 30, 2008, copied to my predecessor, the Honourable Monte Solberg, and forwarded to me by the Office of the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, concerning federal investments in child care. I apologize for this delayed reply.

Let me assure you that the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of the early years in ensuring that children reach their full potential. Addressing child care remains an area of significant investment for this government. In 2008–2009, we are providing $5.8 billion in support of early learning and child care through transfers to the provinces and territories, direct spending and tax measures for families. This is the largest investment in early learning and child care in the history of Canada.

As you probably know, the cornerstone of our approach to child care is the Universal Child Care Plan (UCCP), which includes the Universal Child Care Benefit and support for the creation of child care spaces. Our investments through the UCCP are in addition to $850 million that the federal government transfers annually to provinces and territories via the Canada Social Transfer (CST) for early childhood development. This year, transfers to provinces and territories in support of children will total $1.1 billion, of which over $420 million will go to Ontario. In addition, these transfers will benefit from a 3 percent escalator starting in 2009–2010, bringing federal transfers to almost $1.3 billion by 2013–2014.

More generally, to help the more vulnerable families—which is particularly important in these difficult times—we have taken a number of steps to provide some relief to low- and middle-income families. For example, in its 2009 Economic Action Plan, the Government of Canada announced increases to child benefits for modest- and medium-income Canadian families under the National Child Benefit and the Canada Child Tax Benefit, and for low-income working families we doubled the Working Income Tax Benefit. These announcements are on top of other initiatives we have introduced since 2006, such as the introduction of the Canada Employment Credit, the lowering of the GST and the decreasing of the personal income rate.
As we move forward, our government will continue to work with provinces and territories to ensure that all children get the best start in life and that the broadest range of choices is available to parents. Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

The Hon. Diane Finley, P.C., M.P.
October 30, 2008

The Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  K1A 0A2

Subject: Child Care Fee Subsidy Program Caseload Management

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

Please be advised that Hamilton City Council at its meeting of October 29, 2008 approved Item 11 of the Emergency & Community Services Committee Report 08-013, as follows:

11. Child Care Fee Subsidy Program Caseload Management (ECS08050) (City Wide) (Item 8.3)

(a) That Council correspond with the Prime Minister of Canada, the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development and the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Children and Youth Services urging them to work together to fund child care at a level necessary to support the City of Hamilton’s population of children zero to 12 years of age.

(b) That staff be directed to review the implications, outlined in the Alternatives for Consideration section of Report ECS08050, and report back to the Emergency & Community Services Committee.

Currently, in the City of Hamilton over 900 children are on a waitlist for child care fee subsidies, and demand for these subsidies has exceeded the funding the City receives from senior levels of government for this purpose. Without these subsidies, children are denied access to high quality licensed child care and parents are unable to secure and retain employment, attend school and/or retraining programs, as they are not able to provide care for their children in order to do so.
The lack of access to high-quality child care has been identified as a significant barrier to parents living in poverty who need support to secure employment in order to earn a living wage and to provide the basic necessities for their children. Parents who cannot access high-quality licensed child care may be forced to either resort to using unreliable informal child care or to give up their job, their schooling or training, and may then have no choice but to apply for social assistance to support themselves and their children.

While waitlists have all these immediate impacts, it is also crucial to note that the early years are critical in setting the trajectory of learning, health and behaviour latter in life. Investments in the early years must be considered a priority no matter what economic circumstances currently exist across our nation and province. Now more than ever we need every child to be ready to learn and to be able to connect in positive ways with their communities. The future prosperity of our country depends on all of our children growing into adults who reach their maximum potential. Our ability in the future to compete and prosper in the global economy depends on it.

Research, best practice and the experience of the international community have clearly demonstrated the economic return of sustainable investment in early learning and care.

Therefore, on behalf of the most vulnerable children in our community, we are respectfully requesting, that the Prime Minister of Canada and the Premier of Ontario work together, with the appropriate ministries, to fund child care at a level necessary to support the City of Hamilton’s population of children zero to 12 years of age.

Yours truly,

Fred Eisenberger
Mayor

cc: The Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
The Honourable Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources & Social Development
The Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Children & Youth Services
Federation of Canadian Municipalities
Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Dean Allison, MP, Niagara West - Glanbrook
Wayne Marston, MP, Hamilton East- Stoney Creek
David Christopherson, MP, Hamilton Centre
Chris Charlton, MP, Hamilton Mountain
David Sweet, MP, Ancaster - Dundas - Flamborough – Westdale
Paul Miller, MPP, Hamilton East
Andrea Horwath, MPP, Hamilton Centre
Sophia Aggelonitis, MPP, Hamilton Mountain
Ted McMeekin, MPP, Ancaster – Dundas – Flamborough - Aldershot
Tim Hudak, MPP, Niagara West - Glanbrook