

March 7, 2008

JAMES LAUNCHES *RAISING B.C.* INITIATIVE TO EXPAND CHILD CARE CHOICES FOR B.C. FAMILIES

New Democrat leader Carole James and child care critic Claire Trevena have launched *Raising B.C.*, an initiative to make quality child care more accessible and affordable in B.C.

Costs and waitlists are increasing

Child care fees have gone up from \$50 to \$100 per month in the last year in most group licensed facilities across B.C. The average cost for child care is \$900 a month and can go up as high \$1400 a month. Child care across the province has waitlists ranging between one and two years.

Average families spend more on child care than post secondary education

The average parent will pay more for four months of childcare than they would if they were putting that child through university.

Wages are low leading to high staff turnover

Child care in every region has difficulty recruiting and retaining workers as wages for child care workers range from \$9 to \$27 an hour, with many early childhood educators across the province averaging less than \$15 an hour. Very few child care workers have benefits.

It's hurting the economy

According to a 2007 B.C. Chamber of Commerce resolution, "B.C. has chosen not to prioritize child care. The cost of this decision is having an enormous negative impact on the ability of B.C. businesses to attract women, young families and skilled workers in general to the workforce."

NDP's plan:

The NDP is committed to a universal child care program that provides accessible and affordable quality child care for all British Columbian families.

An NDP child care plan will ensure that care is:

- high quality
- affordable
- accessible
- universal
- publicly funded

...contd. on Page 2

IN QUOTES:

Families, child care providers and community leaders are speaking out for better child care:

“Looking for child care after landing a job was the most stressful experience I’ve ever gone through in my life. In the end I had only one option and it meant sacrificing quality for simply a space to put my son for the day.” - **Jolene Black, Parent, Kelowna**

“How can a mother be expected to go to work everyday, to support her family, when she has no assurances her child will be safe?” - **Leah McCrone, Parent, North Vancouver**

“The difficulty child care facility managers are facing today is a lack of qualified staff due to the profession being undervalued and underpaid.” - **Tronie Brown, Director, Nightingale Preschool, Victoria**

“When it came time for my daughter to go back to work I helped her phone over 50 licensed daycares only to be told my grandson would have to wait over a year for a spot. In desperation my daughter put an ad on Craigslist in the hope that she could find someone who could provide day care. What she found instead were countless other parents searching for the same thing.” - **Joan Wilkinson, Grandparent, Parksville**

“I am an early childhood educator. I returned to work when my 1st baby was 10 months. I had no choice as we could not afford to live on my husband’s salary. I cried every day at naptime when I put the preschoolers down for their nap. My heart broke that I was not putting my own baby to bed. There was no infant care at the centre I worked at. It is horrible to want, more than anything, to raise your own children, and be unable to do so due to the fact that we simply could not live on one average income.” - **Tami M. Overbeck**

“As a stay-at-home parent, I have often wished I could have a part-time job. It just isn't possible, even though employers are desperate for staff. There are no licensed child care providers offering part-time spaces, not when they can easily fill a full-time spot. The Universal Child Care supplement is supposed to offer me 'choice in child care'. I do not feel that I have anything close to choice. No choice on part- or full-time care. No choice of finding something close to home. No choice as to whether it agrees with my parenting philosophy. That's not choice, and the \$100/month isn't helping at all!” - **Michelle Kirby, Parent and Child Care Advocate**

“The recent cuts to child care send a message to parents that the current government is not committed to prevention and protection when it comes to ensuring safe child care spaces.” - **Christie Roome, Parent and Child Care Advocate**