

Child-care funding a drop in the bucket ^[1]

Letter to the editor

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Source: Kelowna Daily Courier

Format: Article

Publication Date: 4 Feb 2017

AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

I must admit to feeling dismayed by the recent announcement to spend \$123,000 to train eight early childhood assistants in the Kelowna area.

On the surface, this may sound like good news. It seems to respond to the current crisis regarding the lack of qualified early childhood educators in the field.

Retaining qualified staff is difficult because the job is highly demanding and wages are generally astonishingly low. This is a result of the current user-based system in which parents pay 100 per cent of the cost of child care (subsidy is available for families with income below a pre-determined threshold).

The cost of providing a quality physical environment and ensuring staff are fairly remunerated exceeds the capacity of individual families to meet (parents can pay more than \$1,000 per month).

When it comes to the effect of early learning environments on positive outcomes for child development, quality matters. There are many factors that contribute to quality child care and one of the stronger indicators is well educated staff.

Stop-gap measures such as training a small number of early childhood assistants, who have far less education than full-fledged early childhood educators, seems to be a short-sighted fix to a very complicated issue, and may actually exacerbate the problem of preserving centres that offer quality care.

A more comprehensive solution is needed to this very complex problem.

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C. (CCCABC) and the Early Childhood Educators of B.C. (ECEBC) have joined forces to create the \$10 A Day plan (10aday.ca) to address the concerns of affordable child care, comprehensive education for early childhood educators, and wages that reflect the complexity and level of responsibility associated with creating quality environments for, and relationships with, young children. It is time to make families with young children a priority.

I urge all those who are concerned about quality environments for young children, and young families trying to balance the cost of child care and living expenses, to learn more about the \$10 a day plan and to persuade government to adopt this very thorough proposal.

Heather Ross, early childhood educator, Kelowna

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Region: British Columbia ^[3]

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