

Voters march for affordable daycare in Vancouver ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

An estimated 200 people strolled through downtown Vancouver in support of the B.C. NDP's promised \$10-a-day childcare plan.

As part of the Vancouver Stroller Brigade demonstration, many were pushing prams to make their point as they marched on provincial justice minister Suzanne Anton's office to protest what they say is a lack of affordable daycare options in British Columbia.

Among the crowd were Chris Saini and Shelley Sheppard, the parents of a child known as Baby Mac, a 15-month-old boy who lost his life at a private home in East Vancouver being used as an unlicensed daycare on Jan. 18.

The two had given an exclusive interview to CTV News the day before the event and are now pushing to make the issue a factor in the May 9 provincial election.

"There's a socioeconomic crisis in this province, and one of the places it's showing up is in daycare," said Saini. "This could happen to anyone, at any time."

B.C. Premier Christy Clark has faced criticism for her government's response to the issue.

When questioned on the campaign trail in Cache Creek on Saturday, Clark told CTV News the B.C. Liberals will create 5,000 new childcare spaces this year and another 3,700 by 2020.

"All of the 5,000 spots will be regulated spots, so each one of them will have the people with the necessary training and all of the safety that's required."

Clark teared up slightly when told Sheppard had said she felt treated dismissively by the provincial government after her son's death.

"Any mother, all of us, we heard what happened to their family, and it is an awful tragedy," said Clark. "Our hearts go out to them and we all pray for them every day. I know that they are grieving."

Critics say the promised new spots aren't nearly enough to address the problem in a region with a rapidly increasing population and cost of living.

The federal Liberal government intends to spend an additional \$7 billion in childcare spaces over the next decade, Finance Minister Bill Morneau announced May 3.

The NDP's "\$10-a-day" proposal would cost roughly \$1.5 billion annually. According to the Canadian Child Care Federation, there's only space for 20 per cent of daycare-aged children in licensed providers across the country. The cost can also be prohibitive for many gainfully employed parents such as Baby Mac's.

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