

Vernon meeting discusses recent childcare investments ^[1]

As of Sept. 5 the B.C. government is investing \$136 million to support quality child care and ECEs.

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Source: Vernon Morning Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 19 Oct 2018

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EXCERPTS

The Early Childhood Educators of BC North Okanagan Branch held a community meeting Thursday, Oct. 18 at the Vernon Regional Library to discuss recent developments in funding. About 40 people came out to learn about the issue.

“It’s very good timing on the eve of a municipal election to really talk about what the early childhood crisis looks like and has looked like in Vernon,” said Sharon Gregson of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C. “We’re discussing what the community plan is to fix it and that’s the \$10/day plan which has been widely supported in Vernon over the past few years and the good news that we have a provincial government that is finally putting together some changes for families here and ultimately that will benefit the economy.”

This “good news” is two fold: lower fees for families and wage enhancements for early childhood educators from the provincial government.

The plan that Gregson is advocating for is the \$10/day childcare plan. She explained that without it, B.C. parents and guardians would see childcare fees increase every year — for some, as high as \$1,000 a month for care.

“That’s pretty unaffordable for most working families and you can be on waiting lists and there just aren’t enough quality licensed spaces and sadly, people who work in childcare — mostly women — earn poverty wages for the very important work of looking after youngsters. It’s been a really broken system and without a \$10/day plan garnering public support and pushing the provincial and federal government to make change, we wouldn’t be seeing the kind of initiatives that we’re seeing today.”

She said that the support they have received is already bringing awareness to communities and making a difference.

Starting in April, the provincial government started lowering childcare fees and starting in September, families who are making lower to middle-class income — less than \$111,000 a year — are starting to see some subsidies; making childcare more affordable.

She also said that the government has committed to 22,000 new spaces and is giving out grants to help unlicensed caregivers become licensed as well as providing grants to the local government and school districts to create more spaces on public land and giving a dollar wage enhancement for ECEs.

“So they’re moving on multiple fronts and beginning to really make an impact. So we have to make sure that this isn’t just a one year investment. We have to keep pushing for investments in upcoming budgets as well,” said Gregson. “The reason it’s important with the municipal elections happening right now because there’s a really important and pivotal role that the local governments have to play. So the provincial government doesn’t actually build on childcare. They need local governments, cities, townships to step up. So, what the city of Vernon can do and what the school district can do is find public land to actually get those grants and get those spaces.”

Meetings like this are happening all over B.C. and have already received great support and momentum. As of October, 49 local governments and 31 school districts are already supporting the \$10/day local plan.

“All said, about 2 million British Columbians that are represented on the list of supporters so we’re always pushing the local government to step up and help make this change.”

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