

Province and UBC fund major daycare expansion ^[1]

More families will have access to high-quality child care services at UBCO

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EXCERPTS

The University Children's Learning Centre at UBC's Okanagan campus will soon add space for 20 more children. Currently licensed to provide services for 37 children, the facility will be renovated and expanded by 50 per cent thanks to support from the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development and UBC.

"Providing the services that families need, allowing more parents to study and work at the university knowing their children are well cared for in a nurturing learning environment, is an investment in the wellbeing of our campus community," says Professor Deborah Buszard, UBC Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the Okanagan campus.

"This is the first major expansion of the daycare since it opened in 1993, and as our campus community grows it is important that we continue to partner with government and our community to enhance services such as child care for our students, faculty, staff and their families. Thank you to the Province for this timely and much-needed investment."

"These campus-based child care spaces will shorten commutes for parents at UBC Okanagan, allowing them to spend more time with their kids or studying," said Katrine Conroy, Minister of Children and Family Development. "By partnering with public-sector organizations, like this one, we are taking advantage of public assets to do more for families and create long-term, sustainable child care spaces that will benefit parents now and in the future."

"We are very grateful to the Ministry of Children and Family Development and UBC for this extraordinary support," says Professor of Psychology Lesley Lutes, president of the Learning Centre's board of directors. "As a working mother, I know how important it is to have access to high-quality daycare and it is especially meaningful to have such a remarkable children's learning centre close to where we work on campus."

The Learning Centre offers an infant/toddler program for children aged 8 months to 3 years, and a theme-based preschool program with full-day daycare for children 3 to 5 years of age. Priority goes to students, faculty and staff at UBC Okanagan with discounted rates for students. If spaces remain they are offered to families from the community.

For several years, both programs have been full with extensive waitlists, says Lutes, noting that the expansion will make an immediate and meaningful impact on both the waitlists and the quality of life for families at UBC Okanagan. The funding will create 10 infant/toddler spaces, 10 spaces for children aged three to five years, and allow significant expansion of both indoor and outdoor space for use by both age programs.

"This was personal for me. There is a three-year waitlist for spaces in the infant and toddler side alone. I thought—can't we help other families have access to this amazing facility and staff?" says Lutes. "We are beyond thrilled to receive the grant—the expanded access will mean more families will find the child care support they need right here at the university."

The University Children's Learning Centre provides learning opportunities and practicum experience for early childhood educator students from Okanagan College, Vancouver Career College, Sprott Shaw College, Pacific Rim College, Selkirk College and Northern Lights College. It is also a learning and training site for UBC students in medicine, nursing and psychology, and provides job shadowing opportunities for local high school students considering careers in early childhood education and support.

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