

Making child care affordable and accessible for all ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

For too many years, child care was treated like a luxury for the few families who could afford it or even find spaces, instead of a service that should be accessible for all families who want it.

As New Democrats, we are working on changing that. With new childcare spaces being announced in Kamloops and across the province, we are building a future where this is a core service that's available to any family, when they need it and at a price they can afford.

Last week, we announced that 144 new spaces are coming to Kamloops. In partnership with SD73, these spaces will be located on the grounds of Happyvale and Ralph Bell Elementary schools and operated by the school district. The new centres will include spaces for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers, as well as before and after care for school-aged kids. As a single working mother, I know firsthand how impactful access to child care on school grounds can be for parents.

The location of these centres on school grounds will be a game changer for parents, giving them a single drop-off and pick-up spot if they have kids in child care and in school. It also helps children make a smooth transition from child care to kindergarten, setting them up for success in their school career.

Another exciting example of collaboration will see the school district partnering with Thompson Rivers University to recruit qualified graduates of the Early Childhood Educator and Infant Toddler Educator programs. Creating good, local jobs for TRU graduates will benefit not only the students themselves, but the entire local economy.

These new spaces are just the latest of over 700 new childcare spaces that our government has funded in Kamloops since we launched our Child Care BC plan in 2018. Province-wide, we've funded over 26,000 new, licensed childcare spaces.

We know these childcare spaces need to be accessible and affordable for all. Tens of thousands of parents are saving up to \$1,600 a month per child on fees through fee reductions and benefits. And by the end of this year, average rates for children under five will be reduced by 50 per cent of 2019 levels.

Part of this work includes expanding the number of \$10-a-Day ChildCareBC sites around the province. This year, we converted 92 child care spaces at Kamloops Christian School into \$10-a-Day spaces. For families at this centre, this conversion is life-changing, giving them the freedom and flexibility to make their own career and educational decisions, knowing their fees won't exceed \$10 per day per child. This brings the number of \$10-a-Day spaces in Kamloops up to more than 200, after 121 spots were converted in 2018 at the Kamloops Child Development Centre.

The childcare system left behind by the BC Liberals in 2017 was fragmented, with parents paying some of the highest fees in the country and sitting on long waiting lists. When we took office, we knew things had to change.

Since then we've made good progress, but we are far from done. The pandemic has highlighted that access to affordable child care is not only good for families – especially moms – it's also vital for our economy. Everyone reaps the benefits of supported families and a more engaged workforce. So we will keep working until child care is an affordable, accessible option for every family in B.C.

Region: Canada ^[3]

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