

Child care issue tackled two ways [CA]^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Adequate, affordable childcare has been an issue on the islands for decades if not longer, and now, two groups are trying to do something about it.

First, two childcare workers from Queen Charlotte are sending a unique petition to the provincial and federal governments, asking them to honour and defend daycare agreements and provide access to quality, affordable daycare.

Steven Pedersen and Violette Cross are working towards a diploma in Early Childhood Education through Northwest Community College, and have 200 declarations signed so far, including one by Premier Campbell when he was here July 13. Their unique petition includes a sock, following the 'Sock-it-to 'em' campaign taking place across the province. Mr. Campbell told Ms Cross the sock campaign sends a perfect message to Prime Minister Harper.

The other group concerned about the problem is the Northern Savings Credit union, particularly the Queen Charlotte branch.

When one of her key staff recently missed a week of work, branch manager Debra McMillan knew it was time to look at the issues working moms face.

Her employee couldn't find anyone to look after her young child for that week, says Ms McMillan.

With 40-percent of her employees being working moms, it was not the first time she and her staff have faced the issue of finding reliable childcare. "It's a major concern," she says.

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The Queen Charlotte area has good childcare infrastructure, she says, but the services that exist are full.

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In the meantime, Ms McMillan says she is having trouble filling vacant positions at the credit union.

"A lot of women don't go out in the workforce because there is no childcare," she says.

Meanwhile, Ms Cross and Mr. Pedersen don't think the Prime Minister's child care solution is good enough.

Rather than live up to the commitment that Paul Martin's Liberal government made to improve childcare, Mr. Harper's government offered families a \$100 per child per month allowance for childcare.

Mr. Pedersen says not only is this allowance taxed, but it doesn't begin to pay for most family's childcare costs.

With childcare on the islands starting at \$10 a day for First Nations and \$20 a day for other families at the Skidegate Daycare and moving swiftly towards \$40-\$50 a day for private care, the \$1,200 offered by the Conservative government doesn't go far.

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