

Kwan slams Liberals' child care cuts [CA-BC] ^[1]

Author: Carrigg, David

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EXCERPTS

Jenny Kwan, MLA for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant, returned to the legislature yesterday with her new baby in tow and lambasted the provincial government for claiming it has improved child care.

Kwan, whose seven-week-old baby, Cee'yan, is being cared for by her mother in Victoria, said the provincial government has slashed its child care budget by 30 per cent in the past two years, from \$72 million to about \$45 million.

Lynn Stephens, minister of state for women's equality, recently announced \$312,000 will go toward renovating two child-care centres in Vancouver as part of a promotion for May as Child Care Month.

The Champlain Heights Community Association and the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver plan to use the money to renovate two existing child-care centres to take an extra 87 children.

Stephens said the child-care strategy of the former NDP government, of which Kwan was a member, was not sustainable. When the Liberal government took power in May 2001, it immediately scrapped NDP plans to implement the Child Care B.C. Act. The act would have made subsidized child-care available to all British Columbians at a cost of \$400 million a year.

"We're on our way to fixing those problems, with our long-term, sustainable child-care strategy," Stephens said in a prepared statement. "The strategy includes capital funding and operating funding for child-care providers, plus funds targeted to parents who need help to participate in the workforce."

The provincial government recently changed welfare laws to force single mothers to look for work when a child is three rather than six, the previous cutoff.

Kwan said Stephens is trying to show the government is increasing child-care services in the province, when they have in fact been reduced.

"The minister is completely out to lunch," Kwan said. "The minister has cut the number of parents receiving child-care subsidies since they took office almost two years ago. They have cut wages for child care workers. They are putting some money back into the system now, but nowhere near as much as they have cut out."

Stephens said the NDP's child-care system was inequitable, with some operators receiving little or no funding while others offering the same services received money for operating costs and wage top-ups.

Under the new system, all licensed child-care providers will be eligible for funding.

More than 60 per cent of women in B.C. with children under the age of six are working either full time or part time.

-Reprinted from The Vancouver Courier.

Region: British Columbia ^[2]

Tags: funding ^[3]

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