

Child-care workers, politicians applaud premier's daughter for speaking out [CA-AB] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Opposition politicians and child-care workers are applauding the daughter of Alberta Premier Ralph Klein for speaking out against his government's day-care policies.

The non-profit child-care centre where Angie Klein volunteered for two years closed for good Sunday, leaving 60 children - including her own three-year-old, Tyra - without day care. Sixteen people are now also out of jobs.

Klein, a single mother whose \$10-an-hour job qualifies her for subsidization, said she blames the closure on her father's government for eliminating operating grants in favour of giving funding to needy parents in April 1999.

"Day care is a thing of the past, at least in small towns," she said Sunday. "We tried everything humanely possible to save money and keep that thing afloat. When they took away the operating grants that's when the day care started experiencing financial problems."

Both the Liberals and New Democrats said Sunday they will relaunch a campaign against the province's decision to abolish day-care funding, using Angie Klein's words in their fight.

NDP Leader Raj Pannu said he was surprised it has taken so long for day-care woes to become apparent. "I've heard numerous reports of hardship," said Liberal children's services critic Linda Sloan. "Some have had to increase fees to stay afloat and that's turned parents away to unregulated day homes." Judy Dube, chairwoman of the Child and Family Resource Association of Edmonton, said Angie Klein's support is appreciated.

"The more people who help to stress the need for quality child care and the need for trained people, the better off we are," said Dube.

Pamela Taylor, an early childhood educator at Grant MacEwan College, said she was glad the premier's daughter understood the issues child care faces.

"Day-care staff in this province are the lowest paid in Canada," she said. "I'm really not sure what should be done at this point, what direction we should go, but I certainly believe we need to invest in quality child care in Alberta."

Iris Evans, Children's Services minister, could not be reached for comment on Sunday but said earlier in the weekend that the province is aware of the concerns and is conducting a review.

"There may be some way to provide dollars to day cares," she said. "In rural communities sometimes the space available, if not subsidized, makes it less economic."

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