

Activists, parents rally for Canadian National Child Care System

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Source: Digital Journal

Format: Article

Publication Date: 9 Mar 2011

AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

Dozens of parents, students, activists and children gathered in front of the Ryerson University campus in downtown Toronto to urge the Canadian government and Prime Minister Stephen Harper to implement a National Child Care System.

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On Tuesday, the Canadian Federation of Students, Ryerson University and George Brown students, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and the Childcare Resource and Research United staged a "mob flash" and a rally at the corner of Gould and Victoria Streets in front of the Ryerson University campus.

The purpose of the rally was to urge the federal government to initiate more funding, better service and implement a National Child Care System. Rally organizers say that Canada scores last among industrialized nations in early childhood education.

The demonstration coincided with the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Prior to speakers delivering their speeches, there was a large "hokie-pokie" flash mob.

"Child care is vital for Canadian families and caring environments for them to learn and grow," said one speaker at the rally. "It provides opportunities for men and women to earn a living to support their children. It also provides excessive security for parents to know that their children are in a safe environment."

"But the state of Canadian child care is unfair for Canadian families," the speaker continued. "It is neither affordable nor accessible for all families. Also, standards are not consistent across the field. Canada has made many, many attempts in implementing a nationally publically funded child care policy. In 2004, we came oh so close and then all hope was lost in implementing a universal system and the billion-dollar promise to us was cancelled."

One Ryerson student who attended the rally briefly told Digital Journal that she feels Canada is way behind on child care and that all three levels of government must work together to establish a universal system.

"Canada's indifference to this issue is appalling," said Samantha Stephens, a student at Ryerson University who is studying public policy. "I think Ontario is trying to right the wrong with its strategy, but it's still not enough for the decades of abandonment of our nation's children."

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