

Hundreds of Vancouverites turn out to rally for \$10 a day childcare ^[1]

Author: Crawford, Tiffany

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EXCERPTS:

VANCOUVER -- Yellow sticky notes covered the window of Premier Christy Clark's constituency office Saturday, many scrawled with pleas urging her to make affordable child care a top election issue.

Hundreds of supporters of the Coalition of Child care Advocates' plan for a publicly-funded \$10 a day child care gathered in the crisp air and sunshine for a rally in Kitsilano. Some walked their dogs, motorists honked their car horns as they passed by and parents and grandparents alike pushed strollers.

Kids ran around wearing T-shirts emblazoned with slogans such as "I am the future," while mums and dads held signs that read "parents pay taxes too."

"It was such a great energy. People were coming out from stores clapping. People on the bus waved at us. There was just so much support...what a great day," said Sharon Gregson, a spokeswoman for the coalition, shortly after the rally Saturday.

Gregson said the coalition is recommending B.C. move to a system more like Quebec, with a \$10 maximum fee and shift the responsibility of child care to the Ministry of Education from the Ministry of Children and Families, so that it would be governed by school districts.

Joining the coalition were local politicians, union members and supporters, including one Vancouver mother of two young kids Devyn Cousineau.

At the rally, Cousineau 31, read a proclamation calling on whomever gets elected as premier to adopt the \$10 a day plan.

"Our view is that child care is at a crisis point and it should be on all politicians radar especially those who say they're helping working families."

Cousineau has a two year old boy in daycare and she is also paying to secure a spot for her seven month old for when finishes her maternity leave.

In total, she is paying \$2,500 a month.

She feels lucky to have a spot in a good daycare where she can leave her kids with qualified early childhood caregivers, but admits that security comes at a hefty price.

"For us it's not being able to save for retirement," said Cousineau. "Other families are making even bigger sacrifices."

For some that price may be the decision not to have another child despite the desire to do so, said Gregson, simply because they cannot afford child care, which in B.C. can cost up to \$1,500 a month for full time daycare.

"I speak to women in their late 20s and early 30s who say they can't imagine the financial burden of child care," she said.

"Children, especially for those in our larger cities, have become unaffordable."

She said while it's terrific when mothers and fathers choose to stay home, or are lucky enough to be able to live in the city on one income, but they should also have the right to work.

"For some women there is a need for economic independence. We can be mothers and workers," she said.

In the recent budget, the government promised a \$55-per-month child care tax benefit from 2015. But Gregson argues that does nothing to help families who face exorbitant child care fees and housing prices.

The coalition's \$10 per day plan can be viewed at www.cantaffordchildcare.ca ^[2].

-reprinted from the Vancouver Sun

Region: British Columbia ^[3]

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