

Rising UBC child-care costs rankle union official^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

UBC has increased child-care fees by 25 percent in just three years, according to a union official.

Trish Everett is the president of Local 2278 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, which represents more than 3,000 graduate and undergraduate students at UBC who work as teaching assistants, markers, and tutors. Many of them have young families.

"Our wages aren't going up in a pace that matches: tuition goes up two percent every year; the cost of living in Vancouver goes up every year; and these are people who are in a vulnerable time of life making very little money and paying a great amount of that for childcare," Everett told the Straight in a phone interview. "And UBC doesn't seem to be doing anything to make that situation less dire."

UBC charges students \$1,245 a month for toddler care. The fee for infants is \$1,355. Regular UBC employees and outsiders pay more.

For typical parent students, only \$200 of their salary as teaching assistants is left after paying for childcare, according to Everett.

International students are in an even tougher place. They are not eligible for provincial subsidy and university aid for childcare.

On June 1, Everett wrote UBC president Stephen Toope, asking him to cancel this year's five-percent increase in child-care costs. The rate hike, announced in April, comes on top of the back-to-back 10-percent increases made in the previous two years.

In her letter to Toope, the CUPE official also asked UBC to "make affordable childcare a priority in order to provide a service befitting its reputation as a world-class institution". She said she hadn't received a reply as of July 23.

"It's in the best interest of UBC and British Columbia to support parents," Everett said. "These are people who are highly educated, highly skilled, and will be entering the work force, going on to make B.C. a better province. And yet they are being held back because they can't afford to take care of their children."

A UBC spokesperson could not be reached by deadline.

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Region: British Columbia^[2]

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