

Mulcair addresses affordable childcare ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Touted as a 'made in B.C.' solution to the childcare crisis, one Comox Valley advocate had the opportunity Monday to present her plan to a Parliament Hill decision-maker.

Charlene Gray, an early childhood educator speaking on behalf of the \$10/day childcare plan, told opposition and NDP leader Thomas Mulcair it is essential working families have access to affordable care.

"I think childcare is the biggest expense families have, second only to mortgage payments or rent for families. If you have more than two children, it's the highest level," she said in a meeting with the leader in Courtenay.

Mulcair was in the Valley Sunday night for a town hall-style meeting and met with Gray early Monday prior to continuing his tour of Vancouver Island.

In an exclusive to the Record, Mulcair said affordable childcare is a top priority for the federal NDP heading into the next campaign.

"It's a vision that's concrete ... people are tired. It's been over 30 years that they've been promised childcare in Canada and they're going to get a government that from day one is going to make this a priority."

He noted his first mandate is to create 400,000 affordable, quality childcare spaces, and in eight years, to create one million spaces with a maximum cost of \$15 a day.

"We know we can get it done. I come from a province where I was actually there when we put this together - in Quebec City - and it can actually be done," he added.

Mulcair said a person shouldn't pay more than an hour's wage for childcare a day, and advocated the return on affordable childcare for everyone is a strong, multifaceted return on investment.

"It's a return socially, because a lot of kids are taken away from problems that would cost society a great deal if they're steered in a direction that allows them to perform, that's good for them personally. It's good for the family, it's good for the child, and it's good for society as a whole."

He said it is essential that families are earning a living wage, and noted \$15 a day childcare is tied to increasing minimum wage to \$15 and hour, a proposal Mulcair put forth earlier this year.

While the minimum wage would only apply to workers in federally-regulated jurisdictions such as telecommunications, transportation and financial services, it could affect up to one million workers, which he said would be a signal to provincial governments across Canada

"It's leading by example. The federal government would say 'we consider this is what's minimum to live.' In Canada right now, if you have a couple that are working full time at minimum wage and have two kids, they're below the poverty line. We don't find that acceptable."

Gray added while families struggle to find jobs outside entry level ones in the Comox Valley, having affordable childcare means families can survive.

"For right now, and even with a higher minimum wage, having childcare that's publicly funded, means that they will have money in their pocket that can support them to feed their families and spend money in their communities."

Region: Canada ^[3]

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