

# Parents, educators rally for childhood support <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

A group of Prince Rupert early childhood educators and parents made the trek from the Jim Ciccone Civic Centre to Mariner's Park Saturday morning as part of the Provincial Child Care Week of Action in support of overhauling the province's model of funding daycare and early childhood support care.

It's an area that the Government of Canada spends less on than most Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, stated a study conducted by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in November.

Anne Falvo and Lisa Pretulac, two Prince Rupert branch members of Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC), led the "stroller brigade" and outlined new policy initiatives that they would like to see implemented in B.C.

"There's licensed childcare spaces for 20 per cent of children in B.C., so that's a really low number," said Pretulac, adding there's both a shortage of spaces and licensed workers who enter the field, citing low pay as a reason for the low number of licensed ECE workers available.

The ammunition behind ECEBC's overhaul is the \$10 per day child care for B.C. initiative that is spearheaded province-wide by the ECEBC and the Coalition of Child Care Advocates (CCABC).

Under the proposed plan, funding for child care centres and workers would be transferred out of the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Children and Family Development and into the Ministry of Education.

Under the current federal government, tax subsidies are offered to families' child care costs via income splitting. Under the 10 a day plan, outlined in comprehensive detail at the website [www.10aday.ca](http://www.10aday.ca) <sup>[3]</sup>, families earning under \$40,000 would receive free child care for each child and families earning more than \$40,000 would spend \$10 for each child for each day that they spend in daycare.

Proponents of the plan say that the increased affordability of it would pay for itself, namely for women who would be able to work instead of staying home to take care of their young ones.

The 10 a day plan subsidizes the lower income families with payments made to the child care facilities by the Ministry of Education, a plan that makes sense, said Pretulac, because of the critical importance of early years education.

"Instead of your child getting a free education from Kindergarden to Grade 12, we'd like to see access to quality affordable child care from birth," she said.

"Children aren't just learning from the minute they hit Kindergarden, they're learning from birth. So it makes sense to have early care and learning centres embedded in the school system which has the large infrastructure [to support it]," said Falvo.

Québec operates under a similar policy of \$7.50 per day fixed fee daycare, which many observers have found led to an increased presence of women in the workforce, Falvo added. In New Zealand, government moved child care under the education umbrella.

"[Québec] did it a long time ago and it's worked for them, so we have a made-in-Canada model and we have the New Zealand model," Falvo said, offering precedent.

North Coast MLA Jennifer Rice was in attendance at the stroller brigade and offered her concern over the lack of women in what is expected to soon be a booming trades industry demand in the north.

"In the Legislature, I met with women [working in] various trades and we asked them what their barriers were to success ... they mentioned that child care was their biggest challenge, so it sort of brought home for me the fact that we're going to see an increase of trade jobs in the north. Are we ready as far as child care goes?," she said.

"I want everyone to benefit from economic development and so if it's a male-dominated trade, it shouldn't be ... The number one issue is finding affordable child care and with the way wages are stagnating these days, people are staying home and not participating in the workforce."

Residents can sign the 10 a day petition at the aforementioned website or learn more about ECEBC at [www.ecebc.ca](http://www.ecebc.ca) [4].

-reprinted from The Northern View

**Region:** British Columbia [5]

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