

**For immediate release** - October 9, 2008

## **Child care a federal election priority for British Columbians**

Eighty-five percent of British Columbians today believe that the lack of access to affordable child care is a serious issue, and 90% of British Columbians believe that government has an important role to play in addressing this crisis, according to a new national poll.

The poll results are from an Environics Research survey commissioned by Code Blue for Child Care; 1000 Canadians were surveyed between September 24 and October 4, 2008. The poll data indicates that while most Canadians share these views, British Columbians' concerns about child care and support for government action are well above the national averages.

This is no surprise to Susan Harney, chairperson of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC. She says: "Child care in BC is in crisis because of failed government policies. Stephen Harper cancelled the beginnings of a national child care system – and BC was the only province to pass the cuts on to families and service providers. British Columbians clearly understand that we need real federal leadership to build a universal child care system."

Vancouver parent Heather Northrup has two children who've benefited from quality child care at Kiwassa Harbour View Daycare. She has a pointed message for politicians in this federal election: "I don't want a handout like the taxable \$100 a month offered by the Conservatives for children under age six. That's not something that is building child care spaces.

"I want parents to have access to affordable, quality child care spaces in my neighbourhood – where the daycare buildings aren't falling apart."

Nancy McRitchie, executive director of Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, explains, "Our daycare is in a 34-year-old portable that was built as a temporary facility. We've been asking government for years to fund the replacement of Harbour View Daycare, as they've done with other Vancouver portables they built in the '70s. Otherwise, our centre faces closure in the near future.

At the same time, she notes, "We have a lengthy wait list at Harbour View, up to two years, for parents desperate for child care."

The BC Government and Service Employees' Union represents more than 3,000 child care providers. BCGEU president Darryl Walker links the severe shortage of early childhood educators in BC – which means fewer child care spaces can be offered – to the need for increased wages and benefits in this sector. "These are college-educated professionals who need and deserve to be earning a living that provides for their own families."

Three of four federal parties have made a commitment to build a universal system of child care services. The NDP specifically promises to create 19,000 new child care spaces in BC in the first year, growing to 28,000 spaces in four years.

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## **Child care - let's make it happen!**

**Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C.**

**[www.cccabc.bc.ca](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca)**

**B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union**

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