



To BCGEU members working in child care
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Caregivers need more than just respect this Child Care Month

New statistics underline need for higher wages

"Our union's message for May – *Child Care Month*, is that child care providers deserve greater recognition and respect. But most importantly, they deserve a financially viable future in their field," says BCGEU President George Heyman.

New census data from Statistics Canada shows that earnings for child care workers in British Columbia fell by 8% from 2000 to 2005. The median earnings for full time child care workers in 2005 was only \$24,826.

The picture looks better in nearly every other part of the country. Median earnings actually increased for child care workers in all other provinces, except Saskatchewan.

The median earnings for workers across all occupations in British Columbia has also slipped, but is much higher at \$42,230.

The numbers show the huge and growing gap between what the average worker in BC makes, and what most child care workers make. The result is a recruitment and retention crisis in the child care sector across the province.

Census data shows that while the overall workforce grew by 8.7% in BC over the five year period, the number of workers in the child care category shrank by 14.8%.

"With child care spaces closing because of a lack of qualified staff, the government must address the causes behind the staffing shortage," Heyman emphasizes.

The BC Liberal government's recent announcements of capital funding for space creation do not include any plan to increase wages or lower parent fees. The funding promised is one-time-only, and there is no extra funding to operate new or existing spaces.

"The Liberals expect workers and providers to make do with less. This does not serve the needs of families or my needs as a child care professional with my own family to support," says early childhood educator and Component 3 Vice-Chair Stephanie Seaman.

"We need government to step up and actually commit to a publicly-funded universal child care system."

The Manitoba government has announced a fairly comprehensive child care plan for that province that addresses staffing issues. New funding is being provided for workers' wages and pensions. The plan also includes significant capital funding to build spaces, and has specific measures to address parent fee and quality issues.

Heyman observes that, "the Manitoba government's vision contains key elements that are missing from the BC government's approach. Most significantly, it deals with the issue of low wages, rather than ignores it."

