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BCGEU offers a united voice for child care, say new members

The early childhood educators who work at **Growing Together Child Care** in Duncan have voted to join the BC Government and Service Employees' Union because "it's time to be united" on child care issues, says new member Kathy Williams.

"I believe the union offers us a stronger voice that will help us get the message out that we deserve better wages and more respect," Williams explains. "We're caregivers, but we're not always very good at speaking out about our own needs."

Mary Dolan, coordinator of Growing Together Child Care, agrees. "We need a strong collective voice in British Columbia to raise awareness and respect for the positive work we do to support children and families. From both a compassionate and an economic perspective, we believe that unionization is the answer to making that happen."

"Our union, at the direction of our members, has made a long-term commitment to advancing public awareness and government policy on child care issues," says BCGEU president George Heyman.

"Early childhood educators deserve better wages and benefits, and BC families deserve access to more quality early learning child care spaces.

"We welcome these new members and look forward to continuing to work together to call for increased funding to build an affordable, quality public child care system."

Williams says that, for her, the turning point in deciding whether to unionize came "when we joined the *Child Care – Let's Make It Happen* rally in Victoria earlier this year and saw the support we had from the BCGEU."

Dolan and Williams emphasize that the board of the non-profit society has been involved in and understanding of the early childhood educators' move to unionize, "and has always done the best they could for staff with the limited funds we get from government."

The vote among the seven workers was near-unanimous in favour of joining the BCGEU. The society currently provides on-site care for 18 children ages 0-3 years, for young parents attending Cowichan Valley Open Learning Co-op school. More spaces could be provided if funding were increased.

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