



January 2009

## BCGEU SAMs demand more child care funding

**B**CGEU special associate members (SAMs) and other union representatives took their demand for increased child care operating funding directly to the provincial government in late November.

A delegation of SAMs, along with Mike Clarke, BCGEU provincial vice-president, and Stephanie Seaman, Provincial Executive member, met with Linda Reid, BC's minister responsible for child care, in her Richmond constituency office, Nov. 22.

Cora Domingo, leader of the Vancouver SAM chapter, told Reid that SAMs are looking for higher CCOF (Child Care Operating Fund) rates, as well as decent pensions, benefits and job security.

"We need the minister to respect the unique and valuable role played by all licensed child care providers, both family and group centres," said Domingo.

She presented Reid with letters from parents demanding that child care providers who already offer quality services for 3-5 year olds be part of the plan for all-day kindergarten, not displaced by it.

The delegation told Reid she needs to do more for child care.

"I think she got a reality check," said Domingo.

"We told her the capital grants she gave away last year, and the small amounts available for training and

tuition reimbursement are useful, but do nothing to address the our basic demand for higher CCOF rates."

BCGEU vice-president, Mike Clarke, said: "The minister knows the BCGEU is backing SAMs all the way. Our



BCGEU vice-president, Mike Clarke, and SAM Burnaby chapter leader, Lenore Canlas, meet with Linda Reid, minister responsible for child care. [top photo] Component 3 vice-chair, Stephanie Seaman, caucuses with Richmond SAM leader, Sreedevi Kuttamkulangara, and vice-president Mike Clarke, prior to meeting with Reid.

members have long supported this campaign, and renewed that support at our last union convention."

Stephanie Seaman, vice-chair of the community social services component and representative of the BCGEU's unionized child care members, contrasted BC's child care crisis with the universal and affordable system in Quebec, where providers receive most of their funds from the government, and parents pay only \$7 a day.



## No word yet on all-day K

**S**AMs have been active on the all-day kindergarten front, although the BC Liberals have not yet made any announcements, one way or the other.

Last February, the provincial government announced it was undertaking a feasibility study into full-school day kindergarten for 3-5 years olds.

The report was expected to announce policy direction this past December, but it seems the current economic situation has temporarily thrown cold water on any plans to commit to new spending.

The BCGEU supports new operating funds for services for 3-5 year olds, saying the programs make sense for children and their parents, but any new system must respect the important work done by existing child care providers and integrates them in a positive way, rather than pushing them out of business.



# UNICEF says Canadian government fails on child care policies

Internationally-respected UNICEF recently released a report looking at child care policies in the 25 most affluent countries.

Did you know it found Canada's policies tied for last place in terms of meeting the benchmarks of success?

Canada failed to meet 9 out of 10 benchmarks.

This was surprising to many, but not to SAMs who know only too well how the government is not doing enough to support child care providers or to ensure a comprehensive well-funded system.

This is proof we need change!

See the report at [http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc8\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc8_eng.pdf)



## SAM says...

### Providers on the hook when subsidized child is absent

Linda Campbell, leader of the Mission-Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows SAM chapter, brings up an important policy problem.

She says the government needs to think about relaxing the rules on withdrawing subsidy when a client does not show up on billed-for days.

Currently, the government demands providers return the subsidy for no-shows (unless the absence was related to illness or a holiday).

But there are many other reasons why clients do not show up, and the provider should not be expected to shoulder the costs.

Campbell explains: "In my case, all but one of my parents are on subsidy and I've had a couple that suddenly cancel if Grandma comes into town, or have a neighbour take care of their child for the day if it's more convenient, and so then I don't get paid.

"I had one parent not show up for three weeks one month and four weeks, another with no phone call, and I was not allowed to bill subsidy.

"This child is worth \$600 month, so that adds up. I've also had one case where the ministry suddenly put mum in rehab and the child in the rehab daycare with 24 hours' notice and cut off my subsidy immediately to pay the other daycare."

Campbell worries this counter-productive government policy will make providers think twice when dealing with subsidized families, and that is not fair to families or to providers.

"People do not want to take subsidized families when there's the chance they don't get paid.

"Subsidy says we're to collect from the parents. However, there's a reason these people qualify and it's very hard to get blood from a stone, or to take food from the mouths of the children, which is what we do when we ask the parents to pay instead of the government."

Families and providers often develop close bonds, and providers want to be able to help all families. This government policy can pit them against each other unnecessarily.

Campbell brought this issue up with Minister Reid during the meeting with the BCGEU.

Reid agreed there was a problem and said it was more fair in the education system where the school's funding is not taken back if a child misses a day or transfers out.

However, Reid did not commit to fixing the situation. If she takes the SAM suggestion to significantly increase operating funding, then high parent fees and the high demand for subsidy and all the related headaches could be a thing of the past.

### Canadian Paediatric Society joins call for national child care strategy

The Canadian Paediatric Society has issued a call for a national child care investment strategy.

The Society says Canada needs to invest now in a proper system, and they describe the current state of child care to be a problematic

"patchwork" of policies and programs which create geographical and income inequities.

This is important support from a very well-respected and professional organization. Read their advocacy statement at <http://www.cps.ca/English/advocacy/Grenier.pdf>

# United voice for child care continues to grow

More and more child care providers are joining the BCGEU as special associate members (SAMs).

It's free and nearly 1,500 licensed family child care providers and group centre providers have already signed up across BC!

Being a SAM means teaming up with other providers, unionized child care workers and advocates in solidarity for a better child care system.

If everyone is united, we are much more likely to have political success. That's why we say our goal is a "United Voice for Child Care!"

All across BC, parents are faced with waitlists that are too long. Providers struggle to make do with limited government funding.

SAMs know it's going to take significantly increased operating funding by the government to build a



proper quality, universal child care system that prioritizes children's well-being, while recognizing and respecting the unique and valuable roles played by both licensed family and group-based child care providers.



# Free workshops for credit

The BCGEU takes professional development very seriously, because it helps workers and providers increase their options.

That's why we're offering workshops that will count towards SAMs' credited hours.

We have held courses on Positive Guidance With Young Children, and are setting up a course on Interpersonal Communication Skills for Child Care Professionals.

Find out when the next course near you is being offered for free. Call Ursula at 604-882-0111.

# Check out SAM table at upcoming conference

Anyone attending the Children the Heart of the Matter Conference in Surrey on February 13 & 14 (organized by Options, the CCRR for Surrey, Delta, White Rock) should be sure to drop by our SAM table, where we will have campaign information and calendars for you to pick up.

Better yet, plan on joining us at the table and explain to other delegates how important it is to make some political changes for better child care in BC.

# WANTED: SAM activists

There are now eight active SAM chapters.

They meet on the first Thursday of every month to discuss issues of common concern and come up with an action plan for working together to make changes on behalf of child care.

SAM chapters are looking for activists to help out—it could be writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, organizing a social gathering, or inviting guest speakers to come meet with a group of SAMs.

Sound interesting? See the meeting notice included in this same mailing to find the planning meeting closest to your home and join us!

For more info on SAMs, call Chris at 604-473-5466 or check out our child care campaign and other useful information at the BCGEU webpage <http://www.bcgeu.bc.ca/>