



Media Advisory

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Social Planning Cowichan Board Explains Cowichan Child Care Crisis to Minister

Social Planning Cowichan Board members Candace Spilsbury and Valerie Nicol traveled to Victoria last week for a face to face meeting with Linda Reid, Minister of Child Care. "We wanted to tell the Minister directly about the critical shortage of licensed child care in the Cowichan Region," said Spilsbury, Board Chair. "We also wanted to hear her ideas for improving the situation."

The meeting was also attended by Loreen O'Byrne, Early Years Director and Special Advisor to the Minister of State, Lisa Dominato, Ministerial Assistant to Shirley Bond, Minister of Education and Doug Stewart, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education.

During the 45-minute discussion, Spilsbury and Nicol, Vice-Chair of the Board, talked about the Social Planning Child Care Report and the establishment of the Cowichan Regional Child Care Task Force to address the problems. They also presented a list of questions and concerns ranging from school closures and the subsequent impact on child care to salary levels for child care workers. "They certainly know now that we're in a crisis situation," said Spilsbury.

"Overall, we're pleased that they heard us out and expressed keen interest in what we had to say" noted Nicol. "We're a bit disappointed, however, that we weren't able to resolve some issues on the spot and we weren't always in agreement, particularly on things like child care wages. Still, we've been heard and they've assured us that they will follow up with more definitive answers."

Spilsbury added that she was pleased representatives of the education ministry attended the meeting. "This was unexpected, it shows that they are thinking of child care and education from a more holistic point of view, which we believe is important. Early childhood educators do more than babysit, they provide valuable learning and preparedness for the school years later on."

The two also reinforced School District 79's request to government that child care numbers be included in school capacity counts. "This gives a more true number of the children who are attending school for learning," Spilsbury said.



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Spilsbury also met recently with NDP Child Care critic Claire Trevena at her request. Travena is gathering information for a provincial child care plan. “I expressed the same concerns to Ms. Trevena. I was impressed with her in-depth knowledge of the situation and her sincere concern,” Spilsbury said.

Social Planning Cowichan is a voluntary organization dedicated to community well being through action, education, research, and policy development.

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