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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 28, 2010

### CHILD CARE LOSSES IN COWICHAN

The Cowichan Child Care Council which operates under the umbrella of Social Planning Cowichan has new statistics available regarding to the number of child care spaces available for families in the Cowichan Region. These statistics show a staggering loss of 538 child care spaces over the last 3 years.

Using the “reasonable response approach” we can figure that approximately 50% of our children aged 0-12 will require child care in the Region.

In 2007, this figure was estimated at 4,862 children. As indicated in the “Child Care in the Cowichan Valley Region” report at that time the Region was only able to provide 48% of the required spaces for child care.

In 2010, the population for children 0-12 requiring care in the Region is estimated to be 4,860. This signifies that with the loss of 538 spaces over the past three years the area is now able to provide 37% of the required spaces.

Hardest hit are the number of preschool and out of school care spaces for children in the Region, with a combined total of 459 lost spaces. These numbers include the recent loss of 60 spaces due to the closure of the Boys and Girls Club at Maple Bay.

Candace Spilsbury, Chair of the Cowichan Child Care Council states that, “The need for a publicly funded child care system in this province (and nationally) has never been greater. There is an overwhelming amount of research that details both the importance of attending to the early years of a child’s life and the benefits to children of experiencing quality programs in their preschool years. This research points particularly to the importance of being involved in these programs when children are in any way vulnerable socially, emotionally, or face economic hardship in their families”.

According to data collected by the Understanding the Early Years project, 23% of children in kindergarten in our local School District #79 enter school vulnerable. For the record, BC has had the highest child poverty rate 5 years in a row. A major issue for child care centers has been recruitment and retention of qualified staff due to the inability to pay adequate wages and provide benefits. The average ECE wage in BC is only \$12-13 an hour. BC is the only province that does not use public funds to improve child care workers wages and benefits. The province has not done so since 2002. This information has led the Child Care Council to ask many questions such as; who is caring for our children? Are they in the best environments to encourage optimal growth and development? How do parents feel about their current child care options? What is the current and future impact on our community and local economy?

To answer some of these questions Social Planning Cowichan will be working with the Cowichan Child Care Council to gather stories from parents and child care providers in the hopes that we can come together as a community to give the maximum support for early childhood development.

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