



Alternatives North

Media Release

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Solutions to NWT Child Care Crisis Sought

(Yellowknife) Alternatives North, with the assistance of the Union of the Northern Workers, has commissioned an independent study of NWT child care operators to determine what is needed to allow them to do the job for families and children in the NWT.

“It’s appears there may be a problem,” says the social justice coalition’s co-chairperson, Suzette Montreuil. “One centre [in Fort Smith] is closing and a number of others are reporting that they’re facing serious difficulties. Northerners need to know what is really going on.”

To help provide the necessary answers, a northern consulting firm will survey child care centre operators to objectively analyse their situations with a view to developing concrete solutions.

“The survey may not help the Rainbow Child Care Centre in Fort Smith but we hope it will help frame the terms of the larger debate,” Montreuil said. “Are territorial government programmes adequate to meet the need? If not, what changes are required?”

Montreuil says that regardless of the results of the survey and analysis, the bottom line is that government has to provide adequate programme funding for NWT child care centres.

“Whether child care is delivered by local First Nations, in the voluntary sector, or as an in-house public service, it is well passed time that our governments begin doing what’s necessary,” she said.

“Alternatives North does not believe that the care and nurturing of northern children should be done on the cheap or as for-profit business,” said Montreuil. “Investing in our kids’ development has been shown to pay off many times over down the road in lower health, social service and educational costs. You pay now or you pay later when it comes to early childcare education and development.”

Montreuil said that Alternatives North intends to make recommendations relating to the federal government’s commitment to child care too.

“The feds have put \$5 billion on the table,” she said, “and that is money that is long overdue. The programme that delivers this money has to be structured such that it accommodates the varying circumstances of each jurisdiction. If per capita funding is not going to provide sufficient funding to allow us in the NWT to provide quality of care comparable to other jurisdictions, then it’s up to the feds to find alternative delivery mechanisms.”

“We can’t allow jurisdictional fights and finger pointing between the federal and territorial governments to result in more harm to NWT families and children.

”We also can no longer put up with the excuse that government can’t afford to adequately fund child care. It’s all a matter of choices. Millions seem to be available to subsidise diamond processing facilities. A half million can be spent on contracts with one consultant with little or nothing to show for it. If politicians see child care as important, they’ll find the money.”

The results of the study should be known January 2006.

For further information call Suzette Montreuil at 867-920-2765

