

Kids First Parent Association of Canada

www.kidsfirstcanada.org

For immediate release

BC Daycare: 30 Percent Spaces Vacant as Government Announces Funding for 3800 More Spaces

December 5, 2017 - Burnaby, BC - A new report exposes Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) data showing a large surplus of licensed daycare spaces. The data is discussed in "Daycare Vacancy Rates in British Columbia: the Untold Story" co-authored by Helen Ward, a BC single mother and President of Kids First Parent Association of Canada.

The data is being brought to light just as the BC government announces \$33 million in additional spending to build 3800 new spaces in daycare centres. The data is from the BC government's MCFD "Performance Management Report" for March 2016.

The Ministry data shows the average licensed daycare space "utilization" rate across BC is 69.1%, meaning a 30.9 % vacancy rate. The Ministry's only "performance measure" for the child care sector is "Spare capacity in licensed child care spaces," indicating that persistent high vacancy rates are clearly a concern. High vacancy rates have been recorded since at least 1998.

Vacancy rates vary depending on the region and children's age range. Regionally, the highest vacancy rates are in the northeast Service Delivery Area (SDA) with an overall 42.9% vacancy rate. The lowest overall vacancy rate is still high at 24% in the urban Vancouver/Richmond SDA.

By age range, the lowest vacancy rate is 16.1% for licensed daycare for children under 3. For age 3-5, vacancy rates range from 21.5% in North Fraser SDA to 42.2% in the Kootenays. School age daycare has the highest vacancy rates ranging from 41.5% in North Fraser SDA to 68.6% in the Kootenays.

The budget for child care fee subsidies also showed a surplus of \$14 million over actual expenditure.

The Ministry's vacancy data has been kept out of policy debate. The statistical evidence flatly contradicts anecdotal reports used to support daycare advocates' persistent claims that there is a daycare shortage that requires increasing public expenditures to expand licensed non-parental child care.

"Is Minister Conroy aware of these high vacancy rates? If not, why not, and what will she do about it? Policy is supposed to be evidence based. But with child care, government ignores the reliable evidence and instead relies on misinformation published by daycare advocates. As a result, government discriminates against children by preferentially funding daycare centres while providing no child care funding for the vast majority of children and their families," says Ward.

contact Helen Ward: 604-291-0088, info@kidsfirstcanada.org