



Strike hits child development centre

January 23, 2013

The Daily Courier (Kelowna)

Therapists, counsellors and other workers at Central Okanagan Child Development Centre will be off the job today as part of rotating job action. Essential services will be maintained.

It is a continuation of rotating strikes in the community social services sector across B.C. that began on Oct. 16. More than 20 agencies on Vancouver Island went on strike the week of Dec. 10 seeking a fair deal with employers.

"Our members at COCDA work with infants, children, and families to provide support, therapy and counselling," said Reid Johnson, president of the Health Sciences Association which represents 15,000 community social service workers across B.C.

"They provide crucially important care. Physiotherapists, supported child development consultants, speech language therapists, occupational therapists, autism interventionists: these are all highly-trained professionals who are passionate about the care they provide to children and families."

Since 2004, the B.C. Liberal government has cut \$300 million in funding for programs that support vulnerable families, people with developmental disabilities, at-risk youth, children and infants in community-based programs, and many other vulnerable citizens.

"B.C.'s government has consistently undervalued the skilled workers who provide these services, and these professionals are among the lowest paid in the public sector. That's just not fair," Johnson said.

"I've worked in this sector as a social worker. I'm amazed at what these workers are able to do for families, often under extreme program budget constraints. This sector has already been cut to the bone. There are no so-called 'savings' to be 'found' here under the government's unrealistic 'co-operative gains' mandate."

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