

Fake claims of connection to burned daycare speak to 'desperate' need for spots: chair ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The head of a Winnipeg daycare closed due to a fire said she was heartbroken to learn her centre's loss was used by two families to seek out child care.

A fire closed St. Therese Child Care facility in St. Vital last week, leaving more than 60 children in the lurch for care.

Other daycares in the city have offered temporary spaces to St. Therese families, in addition to offers of toys and resources to the daycare when it rebuilds.

But St. Therese executive director Cathy Somerset said other families not connected to her centre have contacted the other daycares to access the spots and lied that their children attended St. Therese.

"At first I was really hurt and really offended and then when I sat back and took a moment to think about it it still makes me sad," Somerset said.

"...The province of Manitoba, like, we need more childcare spaces."

Somerset said she knows of two parents who have falsely claimed their children attended St. Therese to get the spots.

First shock, then understanding

The board chair of the Manitoba Child Care Association said her initial reaction — shock — gave way to compassion when she learned of the fake calls.

"[Parents] need child care, and that just tells us how desperate that need is for some families," said April Kalyniuk.

"Do I think it's right or ethical? I certainly do not. But I certainly understand," she said.

Kalyniuk learned about the claims through the media. She said the story highlights the need for child care in the province.

"Child care is here to stay. There should be a space for every child," she said.

"It should be affordable and it should be equitable that you don't have to do this kind of thing, like phone up centres and make up stories. That's very sad."

Support 'overwhelming'

Somerset said she's found a possible new home for the daycare and hopes to have her centre back up and running by mid-July.

In addition to the temporary spaces, she said she's had offers of toys and office equipment from other centres.

"That has actually been the overwhelming part of this that makes my job easier, is knowing that so many people have cared for my families and for my staff," she said.

Since the fire, she said she wants to see action to make child care more accessible for families.

"Quality child care is important and it needs to be on the agenda," she said. "And in 2017, to have so many kids and so many families without care, that's really a shame."

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