P.E.I.'s online child-care registry to be scrapped and rebuilt [1]

Group that runs the registry wants to make it more user friendly

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EXCERPTS

The online registry that's supposed to make the search for child care easier for parents on P.E.I. is being scrapped and rebuilt.

The group that runs the registry - P.E.I.'s Early Childhood Development Association - says it's not working.

"Out with the old, in with the new," said Sonya Hooper, the executive director of the association. "Starting from scratch, we're rebuilding it from beginning to end."

The province's early learning and child-care registry was launched more than six years ago.

Hooper said the registry is outdated, has some glitches, isn't user friendly, and - as parents have complained - some daycares don't even use the provincial waiting list.

"We want it to be more user friendly for families, to make it easier, no matter how you're accessing the registry, whether that's on a tablet or smart phone, that it's simple, straightforward and easy to use," she said.

One request granted, another denied

For months, the association has been asking the province for money to completely rebuild the registry, and to hire someone to run it and support parents and child-care operators.

While the province is now promising money to go into rebuilding the registry, funding for staff has been denied, Hooper said.

As a result, Hooper is concerned the registry might not work as well as it should.

"To have someone there to address those kinks, to work with centres, to train directors on using the registry properly, to help develop some more confidence within the sector, that's all critical and can only be done with a staff person there to support that tool," she said.

The province says it's not providing more funding to hire that person at this time because it's too early to know whether the rebuilt registry will even require it.

"Under the new build, we won't have that ongoing IT issue, if you will," said P.E.I. director of early childhood development Carolyn Simpson. "We just don't know what the staffing requirements will be."

The association was given $60,000 for the rebuild, according to the province.

Hope to be ready in six months

The association hopes to have the new registry up and running in six months.

The province says it will see how well the new system works before it decides whether to provide more funding.

If the money doesn't come through, the association may decide to do some reshuffling so the one staff person who is currently spending a few hours a week supporting the registry can devote more time to it, Hooper said.

"If we're investing in a registry, and we're investing in this tool to help families access child care and help centres manage their waiting lists and provide data, then it just only makes sense to invest in the staffing to support that tool, as well," she said.

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