

Regina daycare reacts with optimism to tax exemption survey ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A non-profit daycare in Regina is pleased to see the city working on a policy that would guide decisions on granting tax exemptions to non-profit organizations.

Colleen Schmidt is a board member for the Cathedral Area Cooperative Daycare, which pays a tax bill of about \$8,000 because it's assessed as a commercial property.

According to Schmidt, a break that includes non-profit daycares would level the playing field with daycares that operate out of public properties like schools — properties that do not pay taxes.

"We're paying heavy property taxes when half of the other centres in the city pay nothing," Schmidt said.

Right now, the city is taking feedback from the public on the policy through a survey on its website.

Some of the issues questions covered:

- Whether respondents would support a policy that only gave exemptions to groups in the sport, culture, recreation, arts and heritage fields
- Whether respondents had concerns exemptions would only go to organizations whose programs were available to all Regina residents
- Whether respondents had concerns if exemptions only went to those that "demonstrate financial need" or whose user fees would be "significantly impacted" without city support
- A limit for total amount available for tax exemptions for non-profit and charitable organizations, to be reviewed every two years
- Annual applications

Schmidt wants to see a city policy that would help grow the number of daycare spaces.

"Nationally, Saskatchewan is last in the country — by a long shot — in terms of amount of available daycare. Right now, the City of Regina's probably about 13 per cent daycare availability," she said.

"I'm hoping that after this consultation process goes through, the city can find something that could help daycares."

If non-profit daycares did not have to pay taxes, families that use their services would benefit as the savings get reinvested into the facilities, Schmidt said.

That would come in the form of affordable rates and trained staff.

"It's hard to attract good people, hard to retain good people if we can't pay a (livable) wage. I know that there are staff in daycare centres who work all day at the daycare and they have to do a second job in the evening," Schmidt said.

"That has a huge impact on the quality of childcare and if we didn't have these taxes, we could definitely be more competitive as an employer."

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