

Still no public daycare spots for children under 2 in Happy Valley-Goose Bay ^[1]

Lower profits, recruitment issues make it unappealing for operators

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EXCERPTS

Despite the recent openings of two brand-new daycare facilities in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, the town still has no licensed child-care spaces for children under two.

That's because for many daycare operators lower profits and recruitment difficulties mean it's not worth it to take on children that young. In Happy Valley-Goose Bay, even with the opening of Pumpkin House and Robin's Nest, the only registered spots for children under two are at the day care at the College of the North Atlantic, which are open only for CNA students and employees.

That leaves only private child-care providers for many people in the town.

Rhea Dale, president of the Early Childhood Development Association board, which operates Pumpkin House daycare, noted that provincial regulations require one early child educator for every three children under two, but one educator for every six children over two.

That means less profit per child, and Dale noted that there are extra costs to a daycare operator to accept children under two, including a separate room, individual cribs, and diapers and bottles.

"It costs so much money to provide that care that people just will not do it in a licensed centre," she said.

"They have to have their own room to sleep in, each one has to have their own crib, the ratio is one staff to three children."

Rebecca Quehe, an early childhood educator at Pumpkin House Daycare, said a daycare operator might include space for under-tuos even if they take a hit on profits in the hope of keeping them when they get older.

"It's a loss leader," she said. "You lose your money opening infant-care spaces with the hope that they'll continue on into your preschool and your school-age programs, where you'll recoup that funding."

It's difficult enough to get early childhood educators in the first place, said Dale. Just to get a trainee in the door, before they can apply to the early childhood education program there are a lot of barriers, she said, including the time it takes for a number of regulatory bodies to process vulnerable sector applications.

"With Pumpkin House, we've hired people, and it's been so long in between that they've found other work, just trying to get the paperwork and it's not that the paper work is complicated, it's just a long process," Dale said.

"It could take like 12 weeks sometimes, and in that time people's lives move on and they have to find work," she said.

An emailed statement from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development noted there is supplement of between \$12,900 and \$16,900 per year available to qualified early childhood educators, based on position and level of certification, paid directly to the early childhood educator in addition to the wages paid by their employer.

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