

Child-care uncertainty 'really stressful' for some parents ^[1]

Limitations could mean some children don't get a spot when daycares re-open May 22

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EXCERPTS

Kristen Chaisson said she hopes to get back to her job at the Tignish Co-op in a couple of weeks. That is, if she can send her four-year-old daughter back to daycare.

"It gets really stressful when you don't know what's going on," she said. "If she's not able to go back to daycare, then I'll have to stay home and there's no money coming in."

With just 10 days to go before all daycares on P.E.I. will be allowed to re-open, Chaisson and some other parents still don't know if their children will have a spot.

Child-care centres will be allowed to re-open May 22 under Phase 2 of the province's easeback plan from COVID-19 restrictions, but certain conditions will be in place. For example, each centre can have 20 people, including staff and children, but no more than five per room.

What the province hasn't explained is how or when it will be decided who gets a spot and who doesn't. MLA Karla Bernard, the opposition child-care critic, said that's causing a lot of stress.

"There's just a lot of questions left unanswered, and time is ticking. So people are really fearful of what it means for them returning to work, and they still don't know if they'll be able to do that at this point," said Bernard.

Sonya Hooper, executive director of P.E.I.'s Early Childhood Development Association, says the province has left the decision on filling spaces to the centres themselves.

There's just a lot of questions left unanswered, and time is ticking.— Karla Bernard

The centres have started contacting parents to see who has to go back to work and doesn't have any other child-care options, but Hooper said some centres will likely have to turn away some children.

"Those lower numbers are going to mean that yeah, there's probably going to be some families that can't access that service right away," she said.

It's also unclear how many children will be allowed at in-home daycares.

Maggie Arsenault said she and other in-home daycare operators are wrestling with whether it will be safe to open and whether it makes sense financially.

"I feel if I open up, I have my family's health, the children's health, and their families' health all on my shoulders. And I only have half a page of guidelines to go on."

The province said last month it planned to survey families to see what the child-care needs would be in Phase 2 so government could figure out how to best meet the demand.

At this point, that hasn't happened.

A spokesperson for the provincial government told CBC Tuesday that the guidelines are being finalized and will be made public soon.

Region: Prince Edward Island ^[3]

Tags: health and safety ^[4]

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