

Trudeau, McKenna vow to find solution for Ottawa daycare shuttered by high rent to feds ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A local Ottawa daycare that was forced to close when their landlord, the federal government, began charging steep rents again, came up during Question Period in Parliament on Tuesday.

Garderie Tunney's Daycare was located in a federally-owned building at 150 Parkdale Ave. It had been in operation for decades, but the then-Conservative government began charging the non-profit daycare market rent to use the space in 2015.

Later that year, the newly-elected Liberal government offered to subsidize the rent for several more years,

Then, the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

With declining enrollment, increased costs, and then word that a \$14,000-a-month rent would be due starting Oct. 1, the daycare made the decision to close down, putting 21 people out of work and leaving more than two dozen families scrambling for other child care options.

In Question Period, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh brought up the case of Garderie Tunney's Daycare specifically.

"Tunney's Pasture is a daycare centre in Ottawa that's not for profit. Their landlord recently increased their rent to \$14,000 a month, forcing this daycare to close. But here's the clincher; guess who the landlord is? The government of Canada. Now, it is unbelievable that a government would allow this to happen," Singh said.

"You know what really sucks?" he asked, referencing comments made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau earlier in the day about the COVID-19 pandemic. "When your daycare centre shuts down in the middle of a pandemic. Will the prime minister admit that his words on child care were again just empty promises?"

Trudeau responded to say his government would look into the matter.

"Mr. Speaker, we're looking into this situation because indeed it is alarming, and I thank the member of the New Democratic Party for bringing that up," he said. "I also want to highlight that we have been working closely with the provinces on moving forward on child care. We know that child care is not just a social necessity, but an economic necessity. This pandemic has shown that the costs on women for having to make impossible choices between caring for their kids, or seeing their kids cared for, and getting back to work needs to come to an end."

In a tweet on Tuesday, Ottawa Centre Liberal MP and federal infrastructure minister Catherine McKenna said she would continue to advocate for a "path forward" for the daycare.

"I have supported Garderie Tunney's Daycare in the past and have been engaged on the issues regarding the rent, as the daycare is a tenant of a federally-owned building," McKenna's statement said. "As Member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre, I will continue to advocate for a path forward for Garderie Tunney's Daycare and tenants of [Public Services and Procurement Canada] buildings throughout this challenging time."

McKenna said she had personally reached out to the minister of public services and procurement, Anita Anand, and to Jean-Yves Duclos, the president of the treasury board, "to attempt to find a solution."

The daycare's board of directors told CTV News last week that they are trying to save the daycare and hopefully reopen it. There is a tentative plan for another non-profit provider to step in and use the space, but the cost of the rent remains an obstacle.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

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