

Child care survey shows impacts of pandemic ^[1]

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Source: Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 25 Feb 2021

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPT

The child care sector is being adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and government funding cuts, according to the results of a recent survey.

The 2020 Child Care Operator Survey is conducted on a biennial basis by Public Interest Alberta, a non-profit focused on education and advocacy on public interest issues. The purpose of the survey is to gain insights into the overall conditions of the child care sector, as well as the impacts of the pandemic.

The results of the survey show that the pandemic negatively affected almost all (about 98 per cent) of respondents, in a variety of ways. The top five impacts of the pandemic were causing operators to lay off staff (62 per cent of respondents), full or partial closures (57 per cent), cutbacks on supplies (about 50 per cent), decreased programming (46 per cent) and increased staff turnover (23 per cent).

Other impacts identified by respondents included increased fees, wage and hour cuts, mental health impacts, decreased enrollment, cutting of nutrition programs and financial strain for personal protective equipment.

The results of the survey also showed the sector has been affected by funding cuts enacted by the provincial government over the past two budgets. Concerns related to this included government cuts (57 per cent of respondents), affordability of qualified staff (56 per cent), funding for noon-care hours such as professional development or lesson planning (56 per cent), recruitment (47 per cent), administrative tasks (37 per cent) and staff retention (30 per cent).

"At a time when the sector is already struggling with pandemic-related issues like full or partial closures, or being forced to lay off staff, the government has not changed course on the significant cuts it made to child care sector funding," said Joel French, Public Interest Alberta executive director, in a news release. "Child care operators have been significantly impacted by the ending of the Benefit Contribution Grant, in particular, which resulted in fee increases to parents, cutbacks to program supplies, decreases in programming and staff layoffs."

According to the survey, most operators (76 per cent) were not consulted on major government changes in the sector, including elimination of the Benefit Contribution Grant, which offsets the costs to child care operators of mandatory employer payroll contributions. On average, non-profit organizations reported lower fees, yet tended to have more qualified staff.

AB Child care operator survey results summary-2020 ^[3]

Region: Alberta ^[4]

Tags: COVID-19 ^[5]
funding ^[6]

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