

'Taking way too long': N.S. child-care centres frustrated with pace of promised government funding ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Nova Scotia is just about to enter its fourth week of lockdown. While many businesses have been shut down, child care is among those essential services still operating.

As many parents are now working from home, on April 28, when lockdown began, Premier Iain Rankin encouraged families who had kids in child care to keep them at home to leave space for parents who really needed it.

"We're asking people who are working from home to give up their space, if possible, to make room for the child or children of our front-line workers who can't work from home," Rankin said during the briefing on April 28.

Many parents heeded that call. In Fall River at Mrs. Robinson's Childcare Centre, there are 30 kids enrolled in the school-age program and 12 younger children in the preschool program and the majority of those kids are staying home.

"Currently we have one in the after-school program," said Molly Rogers, co-owner of the centre.

During regular times the policy is that parents still have to pay the fees even when their child isn't attending in order to keep that spot.

"We rely a lot on parent fees," Rogers said about how they cover everything from wages to operational costs.

But right now parents are not paying those fees.

"The province will cover the cost and ensure after the shutdown is over and schools reopen, you will get your space back," Rankin announced on April 28, when he encouraged parents to keep their kids at home.

Despite that announcement, Rogers says so far, the province has not covered those fees.

"We're still waiting for the parent fees to be covered by the government so we essentially have no money coming in," said Rogers.

"We're essentially volunteering every day."

Rogers says they don't want to have to close and take away that essential care for the one or two families that still need it in the area, but Rogers also says it's not sustainable to keep operating with no money coming in.

"We're struggling," she says.

"We don't have any revenue and don't have any money coming in but the bills, cost of operations, staffing and things like that are still happening."

Rogers says while they are still expecting the money will come in eventually, she says communication from the government has been poor and that this is something it should have been prepared for before making the promise.

"They did say at the end of the last lockdown that they were prepared," said Rogers.

"But here we are, three to four weeks into this one, but nobody seems prepared. Nobody seems as if funding models were in place or procedures were in place."

In a statement to Global News on Tuesday, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development says "all child care centres who receive regular funding from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development received their quarterly funding on April 1."

The statement goes on to say that earlier this month the department asked all centres to submit information on attendance impacts to calculate how much funding they would receive.

"Twenty two centres and all 14 agencies have received their first payment," said the statement. "Centres who have submitted before the

14th May will receive payment Wednesday and the remainder will receive payment Friday.”

Rogers says she’s glad the funding is finally coming but is frustrated at how long it took and the lack of government communication.

“They ignored all our emails until we made a public post and plea to the media,” said Rogers.

Region: Nova Scotia ^[3]

Tags: funding ^[4]

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