

# Mother of twins with disabilities calls B.C.'s child-care system 'opposite of inclusive'

<sup>[1]</sup>

Michelle Martin says she's unable to access care for her sons until they both have support workers

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## EXCERPTS

Michelle Martin spends her days caring for her three-year-old twin boys, Axel and Jaxon.

They both have cerebral palsy and Jaxon is also blind, which means accessing child care is difficult. The B.C. mother has found multiple daycare spots in Langley, but because of the boys' disabilities, they can't attend unless they have a support worker through the province's Supported Child Development Program.

The twins have been on a wait list for a support worker for more than two years now.

With no child care, Martin left her corporate job at the end of maternity leave. But the family needs a dual income to help pay for the kids' needs, so she started two small businesses to make ends meet and now works a full day as a copy writer and marketing consultant after putting the kids to bed, seven days a week.

Martin said she wants Axel and Jaxon to have the opportunity to play with other kids and learn new things.

"They say you're on the wait list and there's no other option. What it actually means is the opposite of inclusive child care, because they're being excluded based on the fact of their disabilities," Martin told CBC News.

Advocacy group Inclusion BC estimates there are thousands of children with disabilities who are waiting to access a support worker through the province's program.

"I do think it's extremely unfair how long we ask families to wait for basic community services such as child care," said Inclusion BC's executive director, Karla Verschoor.

There is no standardized wait time across the province, either, as the wait lists are attached to a specific child development centre. Verschoor said that means that in northern B.C., there may be access to a support worker right away, but in the Lower Mainland it could be a lot harder to find someone.

## Support coming for more families, province says

The Supported Child Development Program offers consulting and support services to families and child-care centres that enable children with disabilities to participate in daycare, according to the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

The ministry said it will support 2,000 more families with access to this program under the 2021 budget.

The ministry also said there's no provincial wait list for this program, as each contracted agency that provides the supported child development program manages its own intake.

But as Martin continues to advocate for her twins, she fears she faces several more years without help.

"I can't do it anymore... I need them in child care," she said.

**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** inclusion <sup>[4]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 14 Jul 2021):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/07/mother-twins-disabilities-calls-bcs-child-care-system-opposite>

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