

Parents in Kensington concerned over lack of child care ^[1]

With only one licensed child care provider in the P.E.I. town, parents are calling on officials for help

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EXCERPTS

Parents in Kensington, P.E.I., have taken their concerns about a lack of child care to city council, and the province says it's planning to create more child care spaces in the community.

There is only one licensed child-care provider in the town, and it has a waiting list of over 100 children.

That's left parents like Veronica Palmer scrambling to find a suitable place to take care of their child.

Palmer has a six-year-old daughter, Adelynn.

"I try to watch her while I'm working and taking business calls. She can get into things, and it's so hard to multi-task working, and watching your child at the same time," Palmer said.

"I've asked about private babysitters, but I don't know what all goes on at a private babysitter, and you have to pay upfront with them which makes it more difficult."

She's thankful her employer has let her work from home, said Palmer.

"If I wasn't able to do this I'd have lost my job."

The town's only licensed childcare provider, Fun Times Early Education and Child Care Centre, cannot keep up with the demand.

Conni Moase, an administrator at the centre, said Palmer is not the only parent experiencing difficulty.

There just aren't enough certified staff out there to meet the demand, she said.

"Leaving them is one thing, but leaving them with someone you don't feel comfortable with is another," said Moase. "And at this point, parents are being forced to just leave them with whoever they can leave them with, find whomever they can find, because there's just no available spaces."

Parents coming together

A group of parents brought their concerns to a Kensington Town Council meeting a month ago.

That was after a small daycare in the town shut its doors. Then the owner of the Fun Times after-school program announced plans to eventually shut down as well, citing staffing issues.

Hope on the horizon

Following the meeting, Chances, a non-profit that provides child care, announced it would take over the daycare starting next week.

Fun Times Early Education and Child Care Centre is sticking around too.

It's opening an additional building for 25 four-year-olds in the new public pre-kindergarten program.

Moase said this will help, but will not solve the issue.

"Everyone on our waitlist in that age group is going to be able to have a space if they want it," she said. "But that still leaves the infants to three-year-olds. There are a large number of people and we still don't have a space for them."

Provincial plan in the works

In an email to CBC, a provincial spokesperson said plans are in the works to create more child care spaces in the Kensington and Summerside areas. No specifics or a timeline were provided.

The town's mayor, Rowan Caseley, says that he hopes plans to open a new business park in the community will mean more child care spaces soon.

"For the businesses to be able to get staff, some of the people have to have child care for the workers. Some of the businesses are

struggling to get staff around, and that may be part of it," Caseley said.

Until then, Palmer is hoping relief comes soon.

"I just hope somebody is noticing this and is going to help us. Because I'm getting tired and exhausted," she said.

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