

Parents pressure Dalhousie over daycare crunch [CA-NS] ^[1]

Author: Tattrie, Jon

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

A chronic shortage of childcare spaces at Dalhousie University has led a mother to start a pressure group lobbying the university to apply for an expansion loan.

Alison Thompson, associate professor with the chemistry department, tried to book her son a place at the University Children's Centre before he was even born.

"When I found out what the waiting lists were like, I was terrified. You were looking at more than 100 children for 10 spaces in infant care," she said.

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Thompson and 30 other staff, student and faculty parents are pressing the university to address the shortage. They want Dalhousie to apply for an Early Learning and Child Care Initiative loan from the provincial government.

"It's time that this issue is addressed. It has been a problem for decades," Thompson said. "I'm doing this for the benefit of Dalhousie families in the future."

Margo Kirk of the University Children's Centre was unavailable for comment Friday, but DalNews quoted her as saying the situation was stressful.

"We get calls from people whose babysitters have just quit, for example, and I'll have to say, 'Sorry, we might have a space two years from now.' We just can't be responsive at all to immediate needs."

The problem extends off campus.

"We probably average 475 people on the wait list," said Dawn Macfarlane-Smith of Halifax's Wee Care Development Centre; they have 72 spaces. Prices are rising, too, with reports of some centres hiking rates by as much as 12 per cent.

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- reprinted from Metro Halifax

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