

# Local families struggling with childcare crisis <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

**PRINCE GEORGE** – Many families in Prince George and across the province are struggling as a childcare crisis drags on with no end in sight.

With over 80 new childcare spaces created at the YMCA Park House childcare centre last week, excitement was in the air, for many, the new spaces were a chance at ending a desperate search for childcare.

However, according to many parents who tried to get their children into the new centre, most of the new spaces are already spoken for, with demand for childcare sky high.

Jenna Rigo and Jeff Calder struggled to find childcare for their one-year-old daughter Rosie, from afar it seems they did it all, applied early, applied everywhere, but it still wasn't enough.

"We found out we were pregnant in May of 2020 with Rosie, and we had heard there were lots of challenges with finding childcare, so back then we started to get on all of the waitlists that we knew of, thinking that would be fine," said Jenna.

Unfortunately, it was not, the Calder family ended up a longways down waitlists with other families in similar positions, considering quitting their jobs if they couldn't find childcare.

The family did recently end up finding childcare although their current arrangement is still not ideal, spending nearly \$1000 a month for childcare, while having to drive all the way from the downtown core to the Hart to drop their daughter off.

Several families reached out to CKPG News about their struggles finding care as well, citing many of the same issues.

Many parents said they felt so defeated at this point about finding child care they have had to leave their jobs.

One of the most difficult age groups to find child care for according to parents is for those under three years of age, with little to no open options for infant-toddler care in Prince George.

Gallia Thomson who will be moving to BC's Northern Capital from Surrey said she believes the challenge of finding care is worse here than it was in the Fraser Valley.

Several factors play into what parents are calling a childcare crisis, a shortage of Early Childhood Educators is at the top of the list, while a shortage of suitable space follows according to experts.

The Ministry of Advanced Education said in a statement they are taking action to try and manage the problem.

"For too long, they didn't receive the recognition and compensation they deserve for their important role. This led to staffing shortages throughout the province and has made it even harder for families to find the child care they need. We're working hard to change that."

Part of that action includes investments here in Northern BC, the province said they have increased the number of seats by 74 at Northern Lights College and 24 at the College of New Caledonia between 2018 and 2021.

Another effort includes in payment, the Ministry of Advanced Education said for current ECE workers, they have increased ECE wages by \$4/hour – bringing the median wage to about \$25/hour, with \$861,000 invested in ECE wage enhancements in the Prince George area since 2018.

"We will continue the work of building a strong professional child care workforce with improved training and wages for early childhood educators because our government believes that investing in the people who deliver child care is investing in children," said a Ministry spokesperson.

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

**Tags:** child care shortage <sup>[4]</sup>

child care workforce <sup>[5]</sup>

child care spaces <sup>[6]</sup>

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