

Waitlists at licensed daycares growing as new childcare grants come into effect ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Licensed childcare facilities across the city are seeing an increased demand as childcare grants and new subsidies start this month. In August 2021, the provincial and federal governments signed an agreement to reduce the costs of licensed childcare fees by \$306-\$395 per month.

The province estimated this would reduce daycare costs by about 50 per cent.

"The fee reduction grant has helped make childcare considerably more accessible to families who otherwise wouldn't be able to access it," Tara Molson, with YWCA Regina, said.

Molson said the increased accessibility has driven up interest in the childcare centre.

"Since the announcement, our waitlist to receive infant childcare services has gone up by 50 per cent," Molson added.

First Years Learning Centre, in the greens neighbourhood, said it is also getting more calls and emails from families looking for childcare because of the grants.

"It's disheartening I think, when families call and we say it's a potential three to five year wait at this point," Megan Schmidt, director at First Years Learning Centre, said.

According to the Ministry of Education, as of Dec. 31, 2021, there were 18,032 licensed child care spaces in Saskatchewan, with 2,218 of these spaces in licensed child care homes and 15,814 spaces in child care centres. It said in an e-mail it doesn't track the utilization of spaces, so it "cannot provide a number of spaces that are currently available."

Schmidt said families need to get on waitlists as soon as possible, even if the daycare is outside of their neighbourhood.

"Literally the second you find out you're pregnant you should be calling daycares or get on their waitlist. Don't wait because if you wait until your baby is 10 months, or even six months, you may not get a spot for when you're ready to go back to work," Schmidt emphasized.

The funding agreement signed in August also added more childcare spots. In December 2021, an additional 601 new child care centre spaces were allocated in 20 communities across the province.

A full list of licensed childcare facilities is posted on the province's website.

Parent reaction

One parent who spoke to CTV News, said she was lucky it didn't take her too long to find a licensed daycare for her child, but added the process was still stressful.

"With some of the places where we were on the waitlist, I didn't even hear back," Jennifer Sahay, said. "As a mother you don't know if you don't hear back, so that part was a bit hard."

Sahay's daughter started at a licensed facility in November. She said she was willing to take her daughter to any good daycare, no matter the cost, but having the reduced fees at the licensed facility has been helpful to her family.

"We're able to save money and we are putting it into an RESP to help her later on," Sahay said.

Region: Saskatchewan ^[3]

Tags: fees ^[4]

waitlist ^[5]

child care funding ^[6]

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