

Local moms push for more childcare services in Parry Sound ^[1]

Author: Fahim, Mo

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EXCERPTS

Two local mothers are voicing their concern with what they call a scarce availability of childcare in the Parry Sound regions.

Parry Sound locals Rebecca Hill and Michelle Oglivie say infant child care was already hard to come by before COVID-19 and has only become worse in the last two years.

Hill is a mom to three kids, two of whom are in childcare and one infant, and Oglivie is a mom to two kids, one in daycare and one not in daycare.

Oglivie says the moment she found out she was pregnant with her second child, around 11 months ago, she started calling local services to be placed on a waitlist.

"I reached out to the facilitators that deal with this and I found out that I wouldn't be able to obtain child care until [her newborn] is about 18 months old," she says.

As for Hill, she says her second son was born in May 2020 where at the time daycares were closed under provincial guidelines.

That, however, did not stop her from placing him on the waitlist as soon as she got pregnant. "He was about 16 months old before he was able to get into any childcare in 2021," Hill says.

Both Hill and Oglivie say they applied to the Home Child Care program with the District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB), which is the designated child care and early years service system manager for the region.

DSSAB says there are currently 240 children registered in the child care that's directly operated by them.

As of December, the board says the Waubeek Early Learning and Child Care Centre (ELCCC) had 58 registered children and seven waitlisted and the Home Child Care Program had 92 registered 20 on their waitlist.

However, the local DSSAB says it is important to keep in mind that waitlist numbers themselves don't often tell the whole story of how quickly a child will be offered a space.

For example, the board says the length of time before a family is offered a space for a child can vary and often can change based on the child's age or how much care they need.

While the wait for a new baby to enter care could be six months, for example, the board says a toddler may be offered a space sooner if they only need care a couple of days a week and are entering school next year.

The board also says there was a noticeable drop in the number of families on the Home Child Care waitlist in December.

The board says after staff connected with families on the list to confirm their current need, most had found alternative care or requested their name be removed from the list.

As for what can be done to increase the number of spaces available, the board says the District of Parry Sound is in need of more Home Child Care providers.

Rick Zanussi, DSSAB Board Chair says child care has long been underfunded by the government, and expansion will take time, even if it begins immediately.

"As the only province still holding out on signing Ottawa's National Child Care Policy, we urge Premier Ford and the Conservatives to put pen to paper. Funding such as this can provide flexibility to expand access to programs, promoting affordability for families, and fairly compensating educators to combat the growing challenge of recruitment in this sector," Zanussi adds.

DSSAB officials say they are doing their part by encouraging the recruitment of new providers to meet the needs of rural communities where space is not available.

According to the board, a provider can care for up to six children in a home, including their own children who have yet to start school. Keeping in mind that the provider's children who are over the age of 4 and have started school are not counted. The board says currently 40 percent of their child care spaces are through the Licensed Home Child Care Program.

DSSAB says the Home Child Care Program has proven to be very successful as it can fulfill the needs of many families during the day, evening, weekend, or overnight.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: access to child care ^[4]

child care expansion ^[5]

child care crisis ^[6]

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Links

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