

P.E.I.'s daycare registry not checked by childcare centres, says Kensington mother ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

CHARLOTTETOWN, P.E.I. — A Kensington mother is frustrated and worried about finding childcare after spending almost two years on the provincial childcare registry without a single call.

Amy DesRoche said she had put her name on the P.E.I. Early Learning and Child Care registry in June 2020 after she and her husband decided they were ready to start a family. Her son, Garrett, was born in August of 2021.

Now, only months away from when she is expected to return to work, DesRoche said she is stressed about finding a childcare placement in time.

"It's hard because my employer is looking for a return date," she said. "They obviously need to know when I'm coming back, but I can't give them one because I don't have a place to send him. I'm at the point where I'm like, 'I'll be back hopefully in August, maybe September.'"

DesRoche said other parents she is friends with also haven't had much luck with the provincial registry and have instead taken the matters into their own hands to get a spot for their children at a daycare – by calling the centres themselves weekly, sometimes daily.

DesRoche began calling centres herself and quickly found out the potential reason she wasn't getting a call from being on the registry, she said.

"A few of the places I called did say they do check the registry, but most of them are just so inundated with calls on a daily basis, they don't bother," said DesRoche.

DesRoche said she understands why some childcare centres wouldn't use the registry, as many of them have parents calling regularly to inquire about spaces. However, she said it doesn't make it any less frustrating.

"It just makes me feel like I need to be almost harassing them to get a childcare spot," she said. "I've heard from people that they've had to call on a daily basis for a month until they got a spot. Some other people have literally went right to the daycare centre weekly trying to get them. Why would (daycares) go looking to fill spaces when they have people knocking at their doors?"

Doreen Gillis, director of early childhood development for the province, said in P.E.I., only daycares that are designated as Early Years Centres are required to use the registry to fill empty child spaces.

However, there are a few circumstances where even those required to check the registry could fill a space without it, she said.

"For example, if a family has a child at a centre and then they have another child, that sibling may end up filling a space at the centre without them going to the registry," said Gillis. "That is so the family remains at one centre, they aren't dropping off at two centres. However, generally speaking, all early year centres are required to utilize the registry."

According to the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning's website, there are 61 designated Early Years Centres on P.E.I.

"Most of our centres now are becoming early years centres, so as more are getting designated, more would be required to use the registry," said Gillis. "Other centres, if they are receiving some funding from us, it could be part of their requirements as well. It is very specific to the centre outside of early years centres."

Things to know

- In a report produced by the Early Childhood Development Association, as of Feb. 15, there are 1,608 children on the Early Learning and Child Care Registry across P.E.I.
- The registry is broken down by age and when those age groups need care, whether it be immediately, within six months, one year or over one year.
- Of those registered, there are 1,257 children between the ages of zero and two.
- Across P.E.I., 564 of those aged 0-2 on the registry are in need of care immediately.

Source: P.E.I. Early Learning and Child Care Registry Update report

Gillis said her office does have the ability to track when and how often an Early Years Centre accesses the registry and can follow up with them if their usage isn't meeting their contractual requirements. But that only happens if complaints about the registry's use are made.

Gillis also said the province is working to increase the number of licensed spaces available on Prince Edward Island. She said over the last year, the province has added more than 400 additional childcare spaces and is now offering grants for unlicensed in-home care centres and for people interested in opening a licensed care centre.

For DesRoche though, at the moment, returning back to work is beginning to feel impossible, she said.

"It's really stressful because it makes returning to the workforce almost unobtainable," she said. "I've always planned to go back to work after my little one was a year old, but if I don't have an option, it may leave me going back later than the year or potentially not at all. Not that I want that to be the case, but if I don't have anywhere to send him, I can't leave him home alone."

DesRoche has received a few tips for in-home care after posting about her childcare issue on Facebook, but due to her need for an early drop off for work – 7:15 a.m. – she said she isn't sure they would work out.

However, she remains hopeful she will find a place for her son and is considering following the same methods others have used to get a space, even if she doesn't want to, she said.

"I hate calling people, I hate pestering them. I know how busy (daycares) are during the day, so to have to take all these calls and tell people they still don't have a spot over and over again, it must be frustrating for them as well."

Region: Prince Edward Island [3]

Tags: waitlist [4]

child care shortage [5]

licensed child care [6]

Source URL (modified on 22 Mar 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/03/peis-daycare-registry-not-checked-childcare-centres-says-kensington>

Links

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