

Public servant parents rush to find child care amid return to office social sharing ^[1]

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Excerpts

With the school year in full swing, workers need to make new arrangements

Federal public servants are mandated to return to in-person work this winter and early spring after working remotely for three years, and some of those with children are working to find spots for their children in extended day programs.

The federal government made the announcement just before the Christmas holidays that all public servants would need to return to the office for at least two to three days a week by March 31 at the latest.

The transition for some begins next week.

"There's immediate panic," said Tanya Lupinski, a senior project officer with the Canada Revenue Agency, who has two daughters aged five and eight.

Over the last few years she was able to take her kids to and from school thanks to the flexibility of working at home. It also meant she didn't have to place her kids in before- or after-school programming.

"We have a rhythm to our life now that works so much better than anything we had before," said Lupinski.

With that rhythm soon to be disrupted, Lupinski is now one of many parents in the public service seeking care for their children.

Federal public servants mandated to return to office 2-3 days a week by March 31

For many, the federal government's 'one-size-fits-all' hybrid work model won't fit

The extended day program at her kids' school remains a possibility if there are spots available. Lupinski still doesn't know.

If not, her husband might need to change his work schedule, or her retired mother-in-law might be asked to step in to help.

"It just sucks," she said.

Warren Salzman, who works with Transport Canada, has a toddler in daycare and an older daughter in school who will need a spot in the extended day program when he returns to the office.

"We're lucky because of where my son is ... for my daughter, it's more difficult because the regular school doesn't really have any extra spaces right now," said Salzman.

Availability different at each school

While every child is entitled to a spot in before- and after-school programs, current availability varies by each school for both the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) and the Ottawa Catholic School Board.

In an email to CBC, OCDSB spokesperson Darcy Knoll wrote there has been a "slight increase" in requests for the program as well as families wanting to increase the days their children access the program.

"When a group is full, we will increase our [extended day] program at a school based on the demand and will work to increase staffing in order to open new groups. This can result in a delay of a start date," said Knoll.

A Catholic board spokesperson said there are spaces available at some schools, while others have wait-lists.

Some in the public sector are continuing to fight to continue working remotely — and unions representing Canada Revenue Agency workers are heading to a strike vote.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Union of Taxation Employees announced Tuesday bargaining talks have broken down over wages and remote work.

Strike votes are scheduled to start at the end of January and last until early April.

Region: Quebec ^[3]

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work-from-home ^[5]

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[4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/parents> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9293> [6]

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