

# With no one to run it, Labrador YMCA's child-care centre is shutting down next month <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Source:** CBC News

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 17 Jan 2023

## AVAILABILITY

Access Online <sup>[2]</sup>

### Excerpts

The YMCA opened in September 2021 with 60 spots for child care and hopes to expand

The Labrador YMCA's child-care centre is suspending its operations after being unable to recruit an administrator.

In a statement on Jan. 10, the YMCA announced the centre would close on Feb. 20 because it can't operate its 60-spot facility without a child-care administrator. The current administrator is leaving at the end of their contract, says the YMCA.

The organization said it hopes the closure will be temporary, but in the meantime, parents are scrambling to find options for their children.

"I'm heartbroken. My little girl really loves going to daycare," Andrea Jones told CBC News.

Jones's daughter Ellie has been going to the YMCA daycare since it opened in September 2021.

"It makes it very sad," Jones said. "I mean, here's this big new, beautiful daycare with all these bells and whistles and they can't get the staff to work there."

By her count, Jones said 15 staff members have come and gone since her daughter started going to the daycare. She said she and other parents want to know why there's been such high turnover.

"We feel very awful about the whole situation," said Sherry Squires, YMCA N.L.'s chief operating officer.

There's an early childhood educator shortage across the country because enrolments are low and people are leaving the field or are concerned about pay and burnout, Squires said.

The daycare needs a Level 2 educator as an administrator but can't find one to fill the upcoming vacancy, she said. The YMCA has raised wages since it opened and is trying to encourage more to study and work in the field, Squires said.

"We're not kind of giving up at this point. We are still pursuing the recruitment of the administrator," she said. "It's a constant recruitment effort and getting creative, and we're in that same boat with everybody else."

There are four other daycares in Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Pumpkin House, Robin's Nest, one at 5 Wing Goose Bay for military families and one at the College of the North Atlantic for students.

Jones said Pumpkin House has a two-year waiting list, she doesn't live on the base, and there are no spots at Robin's Nest. Many parents will need to find day homes where instead of \$10 a day, they can pay as much as \$60 a day, Jones said.

### Pay for early childhood educators serious concern: Jones

Jones trained as an early childhood educator, graduating from a two-year program in 2004, but left the profession because pay was an issue, she said. She would considering going back to the trade if the pay improves, she said.

"The pay does not reflect the responsibility ECEs have. ECEs don't get paid fairly for the role they have to play in a child's life. It's not fair. It's not good enough," Jones said.

The provincial government said it would release a wage grid for early childhood educators by January 1, 2023. In a statement to CBC on Tuesday, the province said the wage grid is "anticipated to be implemented before April 1, 2023 and will be retroactive to Jan. 1, 2023."

To combat the staffing shortage, the YMCA and College of the North Atlantic launched a new early educator training program in November, a fully funded one — meaning no tuition costs — that takes one year instead of two. But while the program launched with 13 students, only five remain because students changed their minds for personal reasons or because of changing career goals.

In the meantime, parents like Jones are left with options.

"We're going to have a lot of sad little faces leaving that daycare on the last day and my heart breaks for them because it's not fair," Jones said. "We were already in a daycare crisis and now this closure added another layer to the crisis."

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