

# N.B. scores low on child care [CA-NB] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

If New Brunswick's child care system were a student, it would still graduate, but it certainly wouldn't be picking up any awards at the graduation ceremonies.

The Canadian Labour Congress has released its first child care report cards, rating each province and territory in Canada and the federal government.

New Brunswick squeaked out a pass with a C-.

"One thing that did save the grade from being a failing grade is we are investing in staff wages," says Jody Dallaire, executive director of the NB Child Care Coalition. "Since 2001, the province has been giving direct grants to daycares and it has made a big difference."

But Dallaire says the province stumbles on affordability and accessibility.

She says the province has so far refused to cap fees, so programs are getting more and more expensive for parents. The report card found that between 2001 and 2005 yearly child care fees increased, on average, by about \$588 in New Brunswick.

"The government invests very, very little in direct grants to programs. Most of (that funding) comes from parent fees," Dallaire says. "If we are really serious about child care, we need to change the way it is funded. It needs to be funded as a public service and fees need to be capped."

The report also found 80 per cent of mothers with children 12 and under work, but in 2006, the most recent year data was available, only 13 per cent of children 12 and under had access to a regulated child care space.

Dallaire says certain areas of the province have lots of spaces available, others don't have enough.

"There is no mechanism (to determine) what programs need to be set up and where," she says.

Last year the government conducted a public consultation on early learning and child care, but Dallaire says the results of that consultation have yet to be released and the whole process of reforming child care seems to have stalled in the province.

"Nothing has really changed since then. We still don't know the provincial government's plans for child care and the signals we are getting are not positive," she says. Dallaire says some of the options for tax reform announced by Finance Minister Victor Boudreau earlier this month -- a \$600 direct transfer to parents for children under six and a non-refundable tax credit, for example -- aren't what parents want. She says parents have told them a similar \$1,200 federal direct transfer isn't meeting their needs.

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**Related link:** Child care report cards <sup>[2]</sup>

**Region:** New Brunswick <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** affordability <sup>[4]</sup>

accessibility <sup>[5]</sup>

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