

Setting up a daycare in a small NWT community? 'It's brutal.'

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Author: Williams, Ollie

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Excerpt

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Harding and the Łegóhłı̨ Early Learning Society have secured \$1.4 million over two years from the NWT government to help build a childcare facility in Norman Wells.

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“There are around 30 kids in Norman Wells under the age of five whose parents and families or guardians indicated they are in desperate need of childcare,” Harding said, relaying the results of a recent assessment.

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In Norman Wells, the society no longer knows where to look for cash.

“We have been turning over every stone, every pebble, every boulder to try to find additional funding to support the building of a new daycare, because we know the need is there,” said Harding. “We know the parents are desperate.”

House of cards

Thursday is a national day of action for early learning and childcare. Patricia Davison, chair of the NWT Early Childhood Association, says trouble brewing in the territory's early childhood sector extends beyond infrastructure.

“People are leaving the territory. People are downsizing their shifts. They're coming off mat leave and there are no childcare spaces, so they're not working,” Davison said, outlining the extent to which demand outstrips supply even in larger communities.

“When we don't have spaces and we don't have staff, it has a detrimental effect on the whole territory. Infrastructure money is certainly a big part of it, but then how do we staff that? How do we keep it sustainable? The spaces that exist now are having a hard time being sustainable.”

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