

Hundreds of families remain on child-care waitlists in Kamloops

[1]

33 per cent of respondents surveyed by Kamloops-Thompson school district say they need child care right now

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AVAILABILITY

Access online [2]

Excerpts

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A recent survey of nearly 2,400 people by the Kamloops-Thompson school district found that 94 per cent of participants believe more child care is needed in the community, and 33 per cent said they personally need child care right now.

Karyn Sutherland, executive director at Children's Circle Childcare Centre, said her facility has space for up to 170 children, but their waitlist is 800 names long.

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The centre was established to serve Interior Health employees, such as doctors and nurses, who needed child care near the Royal Inland Hospital. Additional spaces are available to the community at large. Sutherland said about 200 names on the waitlist are Interior Health employees.

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"When I started adding up the daycare bills for three children, it didn't make sense anymore. I feel for [the people on the waitlist]. I'm empathetic."

She said the centre is working to make more spaces available, but that it takes time.

Staff shortages

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Part of the problem, she suggested, is that early childhood educators are leaving the industry early in their careers.

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"We're pumping out educators and they're getting into stressful work conditions, low recognition, lots of times low wages and no benefits. Stressful work environments, no mentorship."

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The province introduced child-care fee reductions in 2018, and has continued to open new subsidized child-care spaces ever since.

Just last week, the province announced that another 700 child-care spaces in Vancouver, Surrey, Squamish and Houston now qualify for \$10-a-day child care, reducing the cost of daycare by an estimated \$920 per child.

While that's promising, it may not be enough — Sutherland said it's unlikely the hundreds of families on the waitlist at Children's Circle will ever get a child care spot in town.

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Related link: B.C. adds 717 more \$10-a-day child care spots across province [3]

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