

Frustrated western Manitoba parents working to raise \$500K to bring daycare to their community ^[1]

North Norfolk Childcare Centre board wants to build 30-space daycare in Austin

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Excerpts

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The province's child care search website shows no daycare spaces available near Austin or MacGregor, in the municipality of North Norfolk, aside from an Austin nursery school that only operates two mornings a week from September to June and doesn't accept kids under the age of three.

It shows no available spaces in Portage la Prairie, 35 kilometres to the east of MacGregor, and no full-time spaces in Brandon, 85 kilometres to the west.

One of Brandon's largest daycares, the YMCA, has suspended its waitlist due to the "overwhelming" number of kids already on it.

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Most Manitobans live in what's referred to as a "child-care desert" — defined as an area where there are more than three children for every licensed child-care space. Across Manitoba, there are child-care spaces for fewer than one in five children.

Jodie Kehl, executive director of the Manitoba Childcare Association, says it's not unusual to see family planning or parents' careers affected by a lack of access to affordable care.

"The moment that they learn that they're expecting, they're going on waiting lists," Kehl said, and she's heard of those lists reaching upwards of 700 or 800 before being closed.

"Many families will not access the child care until the child is well aged out."

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As part of Manitoba's child-care agreement with the federal government, the province has committed to creating 23,000 new non-profit child-care spaces by 2026. That includes an initiative, announced by the previous Progressive Conservative government, to expand child-care in several rural communities with modular, "ready-to-move" child-care facilities.

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Related link: ‘Day care in a box’ brings pre-fab child care facilities to rural Manitoba ^[3]

Region: Manitoba ^[4]

Tags: child care deserts ^[5]

- cost ^[6]
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