

P.E.I. looks to limit new daycares [CA-PE] ^[1]

CBC News

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EXCERPTS

Prince Edward Island is considering a cap on the number of new daycares allowed to open in the province, but a group of parents is lobbying to maintain the current system.

Child-care centres on P.E.I. are private businesses, but they have to be licensed by the province. Currently, getting a licence simply involves fulfilling certain criteria, but the province is concerned there are too many daycares.

"We know that there are recruitment and retention issues with early childhood educators, and it has been very difficult for some of the centres to maintain staff," Kathy Jones, the province's director of social programs, told CBC News Friday.

"We also know that there are 67 per cent presently of our early childhood centres that are operating below their licence capacity."

Competition sparks innovation: parents

But for a group of parents, having as broad a choice as possible is a larger issue than trouble retaining staff. Group spokeswoman Gail Rhyno said the group wants government to leave the system alone, and has begun to lobby MLAs in an e-mail campaign.

"Competition is good for the customer and in this case the customer is the child, you know, the best interests of the child," said Rhyno.

When new places open up, maybe they bring in new innovation, maybe they bring along with them new programming, then it filters out among the system and everybody kind of reaches a bit higher for the bar."

The province argues daycares can't be looked at solely as businesses and that having too many centres or too few workers could harm the quality of care.

The province is in the midst of public consultations on the issue, but is hoping to move quickly and introduce changes in the spring sitting of the legislature.

The legislature opens again April 4.

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