

Labour shortage a worry to child centres [CA-AB] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS Alberta's labour shortage appears to be causing concern among child-care centres that they can't meet proposed deadlines for tough new standards, says a specialist in the field. The question is whether the centres will be able to attract sufficiently trained staff to meet the requirements, Sheila Brown, chairwoman of the Alberta Child Care Network Association, said today. "I don't think anybody ... really objects to the fact that we should have training," Brown said. "The practical aspect of it that they're worried about is in terms of, 'Can we implement this now?' " She said that's her initial understanding of why just 52 per cent of people taking part in a government consultation process support proposed deadlines for increasing minimum staff qualifications. Opposition to the deadlines stands at 38 per cent, says a report Alberta Children's Services released today. Another 10 per cent neither agree or disagree. The deadlines would set increasingly tough training thresholds for 2008 and 2012. "Some respondents expressed concern that out-of-school care and preschool staff might be unable to meet the proposed certification requirements in the allotted time," the report says. The report, called What We Heard, follows consultations in May and June among child-care operators and workers, parents and others. Almost 1,500 people gave their opinions on proposed child-care standards. The report shows that all proposals won majority support, ranging as high as 91 per cent in the case of minimum requirements for furnishings and play equipment. But support on training and staff-child ratios was weakest. Some felt the proposed ratios - which vary depending on children's ages and the types of care programs - should be stricter. Among out-of-school care workers, for instance, 61 per cent objected to ratios allowing just one worker for up to 15 students. ... - reprinted from the Edmonton Journal

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