

Higher child care fees called essential [CA-YT] ^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

Child care centres in the Yukon will soon have no choice but to raise their fees to sustain their services, says Cyndi Desharnais, president of the Yukon Child Care Association.

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Hers is not the first child care centre to up the rates over recent weeks.

La Garderie du Petit Cheval Blanc, the Yukon's only French-language child care centre, is raising its rates by 30 per cent.

The cost will work out to approximately \$200 more a month for the parents of children attending the centre full-time, said Celine Yergeau, La Garderie's manager.

The decision was made in the wake of the federal Conservatives' decision to scrap the \$5-billion series of federal-provincial child-care deals reached with the provinces.

The Conservatives will instead be offering parents \$1,200 per year for each child in their home under the age of six. The money can be used for day care, babysitters or to help offset the cost of being a stay-at-home parent.

That change has meant that money that would have been flowing to the child-care centres is now in the hands of parents, said Yergeau, and to try to get some of it back, the costs are having to be raised.

In the end, parents of children at La Garderie will be paying about \$60 above what they will be receiving from the child care allowance, she said.

...

There are clear problems with the federal government's stance on child care, said Desharnais, but resolving some of the concerns must come from a joint effort of Ottawa and the Yukon government.

The cost of living in the territory has gone up dramatically over recent years, she said, but the wages for child care workers remain low.

Day cares want to recruit trained staff who have diplomas, but are unable to offer them competitive wages, she said. It makes it difficult to retain employees.

...

Health and Social Service Minister Brad Cathers said the concerns regarding the territory's child care system are not new.

"Wages, training and cost pressures have been a concern for quite a few years," he said.

The Yukon Party government has been addressing child care and following up on recommendations from the child care working group that focused on enriching the direct operating grant, he said.

...

Cathers has met with federal Human Resources and Social Development Minister Diane Finley to discuss child care in the Yukon.

"(The Conservatives) are committed to implementing their election commitments, but that's not what Yukon child care operators had hoped for," said Cathers.

...

- reprinted from the Whitehorse Daily Star

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