

Mom laments day-care gap: Licensed infant care nearly impossible to find in Orillia [CA] ^[1]

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Source: Packet & Times (Orillia)

Format: Article

Publication Date: 6 May 2006

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Before Krista Storey went on maternity leave, she was already thinking about who would care for her child when she returned to work.

A year later, while preparing to re-enter the workforce, she found out her son Harrison was too young for most child-care centres in Orillia.

All but one are licensed for children 18 months and up.

"It was necessary to find somewhere to put my child, but there was only one facility in the city that takes infants," she said.

The Orillia Central Pre-school is the city's only licensed child-care centre with an infant room. However, its nine spaces are currently full, with 12 families on the waiting list.

The challenge for child-care providers is the cost. Under the Day Nurseries Act, there must be three care-givers for every infant. Facilities must also be equipped with change tables, napping areas, sinks and more.

So, when Storey went in search of child care for her sons, aged one and four, it became a very trying task.

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There is a high demand for infant care across Simcoe County, said Karen Evans, YMCA manager of children's services.

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To open up an infant-care facility, or to add spaces to one of the six current YMCA child-care programs in Orillia, would cost money.

"Infant care is the most expensive type of care to operate, but we'll continue to work with municipal governments and create other partnerships to continue increasing spaces," said Evans.

At the federal level of government, child care was paid some attention in Tuesday's budget when Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced his child-care plan.

Harper said his plan, costing \$250 million a year, would see 125,000 day-care spaces added across the nation in the next five years.

It also included the controversial allowance of \$1,200 per year for every child under the age of six.

Critics have said the money will not make a dent in parents' child-care expenses. Storey agreed she would rather see that money put toward infant care.

"The money is useless to me. Give it to the day-care provider so we will have better day care for our children," she said. "Everybody should have access to it.

"Every child deserves the chance for a good start."

- reprinted from the Orillia Packet & Times

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