

Child-care lobby's numbers are a joke [CA-MB]^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

There are more kids on waiting lists for licensed child care than there are child-care spots in Winnipeg, according to a recent study by a University of Manitoba professor.

It's a great sound bite for the government child-care lobby that wants billions of dollars more poured into the not-for-profit, licensed child-care industry at the expense of all other child-care options.

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It packs a powerful punch. But it's wrong.

What Prentice's study doesn't tell you is how many of those names are counted more than once.

You see, families don't just put their names on one waiting list. They often put them on two or more. And many centres have no policy for removing names from their wait lists, even when the family doesn't need the space anymore.

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Trouble is, they're phantom numbers. Most of the lists include names of kids who are on other lists or who don't need a spot anymore.

I asked each centre to tell me what their policy is on updating their waiting lists.

Of the 44 child-care centres that responded to my request, nearly half — 20 — had no policy at all on updating their list.

Which means outdated names could linger on their lists for years, even if the space is no longer required.

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For example, Lindenwoods Child Care Centre says it has 600 children on their waiting list. But the centre has no policy of taking people off the list who don't need the space anymore.

"It is the families' responsibility to call us and have their name removed," wrote Sharon Allen, the centre's executive director.

"Our policy is to keep a family on the list until they tell us otherwise."

Nobody knows how many families are on multiple lists because there is no central wait list registry.

But what we do know is that centres routinely tell parents to get their names on as many lists as possible.

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And it makes it very difficult to trust any of the numbers coming from the child-care lobby these days.

- reprinted from the Winnipeg Sun

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