

Funding freeze means day care could cost parents thousands [CA-NB] ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

The parents of special needs children could be paying thousands of dollars for day care this fall because demand is outstripping provincial funding for the program.

Family and Community Services Minister Tony Huntjens responded to accusations in the legislature Wednesday that special needs children will no longer have the same access as other children to day-care services.

Mike Murphy, Liberal MLA for Moncton North, said Wednesday as many as 25 families in the Moncton area won't have access to the specialized integrated day-care service since funding for the program is being frozen at last year's levels.

Mr. Huntjens said it isn't a case of cost cutting, rather the need is far outweighing what the province can afford to subsidize.

Integrated day cares place children with special needs and disabilities in day cares with children who don't have special needs, and provide extra assistance for children in wheelchairs, or who are blind or deaf, for example. It is thought that interaction with other children and offering children pre-school education benefits all children, not just those with special needs.

There won't be an increase in funding for integrated day care this year, which falls under the department's early childhood initiatives program. Last year, the province financed spots for 400 children across New Brunswick, although more than 500 children provincially use the program.

Bonny Harvey is the president of the board of directors for the Preschool Centre, a daycare in Fredericton. Its three locations, with 236 kids, offer integrated daycare.

She said if funding isn't increased, many special needs kids will have to go without specialized day care this fall.

- reprinted from The New Brunswick Telegraph Journal

Region: New Brunswick ^[2]

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special needs ^[4]

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