

Province's day cares ranked last in Canada [CA-NB]^[1]

The Child Care Report Card included in this month's issue of Today's Parent magazine gives New Brunswick child care an overall grade of D-.

Author: McGinnis, Sarah

Source: The New Brunswick Telegraph Journal

Format: Article

Publication Date: 23 Apr 2004

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

New Brunswick parents hope their kids have the best child care in the country but according to a report by Today's Parent Magazine, the quality of day cares in this province ranks lowest in Canada. The Child Care Report Card included in this month's issue of the magazine gives New Brunswick child care an overall grade of D-. Quality indicators such as pay and training for day-care workers also received a D-, as did provincial spending. In terms of availability, New Brunswick scored a C+. Family and Community Services Minister Tony Huntjens says the evaluation isn't valid because it was based on outdated information and doesn't include the improvements made over the last six years. Author John Hoffman said the data is the most recent figures available since this country does not regularly track child-care indicators such as wages and provincial spending. The chief concern, Mr. Hoffman noted, was that unlike every other province, New Brunswick does not have any training requirement for those caring for children in day cares. "The thing about New Brunswick, no question, is training. Most provinces, like Nova Scotia, have certain number of staff that are required to have at least a one-year early childhood education certificate," he said. Other provinces hovered between 50 per cent and 80 per cent of child-care workers having a two-year early childhood education certificate while only 19 per cent of New Brunswick's day-care employees possessed this level of training. Mr. Huntjens said this complaint shows how outdated this report card is, since the province has enacted new legislation requiring that all child-care directors and one in four staff must complete one year of community college training in child care education by April 2006. "That's the inaccuracy of it. We do have training requirements...We already spent about \$1.8 million on training and we are again this year putting more money into the training of day-care providers," Mr. Huntjens said. Rate of pay was another key issue outlined in the report card. In New Brunswick, day-care providers earned \$7.12 an hour in 2001, or 54 per cent of the province's average hourly wage. Newfoundland was the only place where child-care workers earn less, garnering a mere \$6.76 an hour, whereas in Nova Scotia, they received \$8.51 an hour. "In most provinces the pay for child-care workers was about the same or less than a parking attendant," Mr. Hoffman said. "If you don't pay people well it is hard to attract and keep good people. Many will just move on to other careers." A spokeswoman for the advisory council on the status of women said this is exactly what the province must improve to ensure the successes of its youngest residents. "To attract and retain trained staff, you have to do more than pay them seven and eight dollars an hour," Rosella Melanson said. "You can't invest in training without improving salaries and expect quality to improve (or staff to remain). It is like pouring water into a bucket with a hole in it." "Our problem in New Brunswick is there is little in place to gauge quality and to improve quality. We need more public funds." Mr. Huntjens said the province has already begun pouring more money into the system. Since 2001, he said, they have spent \$12 million on child-care initiatives. As for raising salaries of day-care workers, he said progress is being made. "We have addressed it to some degree in the past and this year I think we are spending around \$5 million this year in additional wages for people in the day-care service," Mr. Huntjens said. When it came to provincial spending, New Brunswick got a D-. The government contributes \$105 per child under 12 for regulated spots in day cares compared to the \$980 Quebec forks out per child. In terms of spending, Mr. Hoffman noted there has been a huge shift in provincial support. "In 1995 New Brunswick was spending \$25 per child and in 2001 New Brunswick quadrupled their per capita expenditure." Mr. Huntjens said spending levels have continued to soar under his government. "We are investing vast sums of money into the system," he countered. New Brunswick also wasn't the only province to get a D on the report card. Both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland earned D+ while Quebec's long-standing provincial system was the only province to garner an A. After 35 years as a teacher and with his wife running a day care of her own, Mr. Huntjens said he has no qualms giving the day-care centres in this province a more than passing grade.

- reprinted from the New Brunswick Telegraph Journal

Region: New Brunswick^[2]

Tags: funding^[3]

quality^[4]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/04/04/provinces-day-cares-ranked-last-canada-ca-nb> [2]
<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7854> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [4]
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/quality>