

Editorial: What is wanted from daycares? [CA-NB] ^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

What is wanted from daycares?

We say: The public and government must consider carefully what they want from their daycares

At a meeting Tuesday evening of the Moncton region branch of Early Childhood Care and Education New Brunswick, speakers warned of a "looming child care crisis" and complained of low daycare pay, uncertainty over whether a three-year government program that has helped top-up earnings and buy equipment will continue, staff turnover rates, and cost to parents if they were asked to cover the cost of boosting pay from \$7.57 per hour to the range of \$12-14 per hour the association believes is reasonable.

We doubt any reasonable person would want to deny those who take care of children a reasonable pay rate that acknowledges the importance of the work and special training they may have. Yet there are other issues involved as well that merit close inspection and thorough public debate.

One is who should pay, and how. Should we just expect the provincial government to pick up the bills or should any increases in costs be shared by the users as well? If a \$50 per week increase is too much on top of existing fees, as was suggested at the meeting, perhaps \$25 per week would not be. There may also be better routes, including improved childcare tax deductions for families (federal and/or provincial). If more money is required, there still remains legitimate questions about where, and how, it should be found.

Daycares for some years have been transforming themselves into quasi-schools. One argument for increased pay is that the workers often have attended university and are "child care professionals" with specialized knowledge on par with teachers. And there are expectations of even higher "standards" in future.

Is this transformation truly necessary? Daycare work, is increasingly being "professionalized", but just how professional do daycare workers really have to be? It is not a question that has been well or thoroughly debated by the public. We already have a good kindergarten system and a school system, is it necessary to create another level? How we answer such questions have a large bearing on costs and the other issues. If pay is too low, that is one thing. But there is a larger issue. Does the standards bar truly need to be raised?

- reprinted from New Brunswick Times and Transcript.

Region: New Brunswick ^[2]

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