

Recent federal funding announced to enhance the low salaries of day care workers unfairly disbursed by the province [CA-NS] ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

The Government of Nova Scotia continues to severely penalize day care centers that accept children with special needs.

Federal funding announced in November 2001 by the Provincial Government was administered by the Province's Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Initiative and used ratios that were minimum standards of care for children that did not take into account that children with special needs do have different and a wide spectrum of care requirements.

Zinck said to its credit, the government recognized that low wages and minimal benefits are contributors to the difficulties of attracting and keeping qualified childhood staff. All licensed full day early childhood education facilities in Nova Scotia were eligible for assistance.

When the terms and conditions of grant money distribution was revealed however, it was readily apparent that facilities whose enrolment included a large percentage of children with special needs were severely penalized. The formula for payment uses the child to teacher ratios prescribed by the provincial child care regulations, minimum standards.

According to Zinck, in developmental centers where as many as 50% of children have special needs, programs cannot be safely or effectively delivered under the ratios preferred by the government. The result of this approach has been a default discrimination against workers who encounter the most challenging situations in child care. "Every day we face the very real possibility of losing talented and caring staff to better paid positions in facilities that serve few if any children with special needs."

In yesterday's question period at Province House, the New Democrat Community Services critic, Jerry Pye, confronted Community Services Minister David Morse on the issue. Mr. Morse waffled in his response only to say that the matter was a "time consuming process" and that there were a "whole bunch of considerations". Mr. Morse said that the topic remains under review.

"For the staff and children of developmental childcare centres, these are hollow words," said Zinck. "Change is needed and the Hamm government must acknowledge this and properly support early childhood education, care and intervention for children with special needs. If not, what will the families do when centers can no longer accept them because they can not adequately help their children."

-Reprinted from Canadian NewsWire

Region: Nova Scotia ^[2]

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