

Daycare viability still a major question ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Daycare owners on P.E.I. are struggling with the question of whether they can continue to operate viable businesses under the province's new early childhood development reform plans.

The province held its third and final information session with daycare workers and owners Tuesday night. Under the new plan daycares will have to follow more stringent rules in order to get additional provincial funding.

About 100 daycare workers and owners met at The Harmony House in Hunter River and grilled government officials for more than three hours about the plan. Media was allowed to sit in but not record during the meeting.

Paul Stevenson, operator of Precious Jewels Day Care in Charlottetown, felt the meeting still came up short on information.

"I think there's still a lot of questions, a lot of anxiety, listening to some of the operators," said Stevenson.

"They've got to make a decision for September, based upon what's coming now."

The amount of time operators have to make a decision seemed to be the biggest concern to come out of the meeting. They have one month to decide whether to join the government's system, stay private and risk losing all funding, or get out of the business.

Elizabeth Jeffrey, owner of Little Wonders Early Learning Center, came to the meeting from Charlottetown.

"I sat down with my accountant today for a couple of hours and had a lot of discussions around what it's going to cost to run the center," she said.

Like other day care owners, Jeffrey is concerned the government money still won't make the business work.

Other daycare operators told the meeting they were worried about having to merge into bigger centers to meet the government's minimum enrollment of 40 children. Another woman told CBC News she had planned to start a new daycare, but after this meeting she felt her business idea won't fit with the new regulations.

Another operator said the new plan is everything the industry has been asking for.

The province said it will give daycare owners more details on paper this weekend.

- reprinted from CBC News

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