

Coalition pushes universal childcare idea ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The New Brunswick Child Care Coalition is pushing the need for a universal child-care program in the run up to the fall provincial election.

The coalition held a news conference on Tuesday to issue a report drafted after studying 80 mothers who used daycare services over the last 18 months.

Jody Dallaire, the executive director of the child care coalition, said the provincial government should move toward a publicly-funded daycare model that would be a universal, free program, similar to kindergarten.

"So far with child care we've chosen that we're going to provide funds to parents and hope that they're going to be able to find a space," Dallaire said.

"So far, that model in Canada and New Brunswick is not working for us. We're not able to find spaces. Spaces are unaffordable."

The coalition's report, which was funded by Status of Women Canada, said the mothers surveyed in the report had four common complaints about the current daycare model: cost, quality, lack of spaces and lack of infant spaces.

The 16-page report also found a series of other problems that cropped up during the eight workshops that were held throughout New Brunswick, including, many daycares do not respond to the needs of seasonal workers, long waiting lists that are poorly managed and a lack of French services in minority settings.

Publicly-funded model

The child care coalition also said at the news conference, which was held in Fredericton, that only one in five New Brunswick children have access to daycare.

The organization plans to mobilize parents to make daycare funding an issue for politicians before the Sept. 27 election.

Tracey Law, who operates a daycare in Fredericton, said she wants to see the next provincial government invest more money and put it in operators to expand or start new daycares.

"At this point, if we could just even have the government subsidize more spots for parents that are in need because the waiting lists are huge and I don't think little token amounts are ever going to address that type of thing," Law said.

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