

Resolving childcare and housing shortages ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

REGINA -- The president of the University of Regina Students' Union (URSU) contends it's quicker for university students in Regina to get a degree than to find childcare.

"A student could finish a degree before they could find a childcare space for their kid - which is ridiculous," Kent Peterson said on Thursday.

Peterson spoke to reporters following a news conference during which NDP Leader Dwain Lingenfelter and Cam Broten, the party's critic for education, employment and immigration announced that, if elected, their party would make funding a student housing and childcare project a priority.

"We would provide the full \$25 million of provincial funding needed to create the new 608-bed residence and 180 new childcare spaces here on the U of R campus," Broten said.

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The university's two daycares - Awasis Child Care and Wascana Daycare - can each accommodate 45 children.

"I would say there are 400 families waiting for a spot between the two daycares," said Lisa Hancock, director of Wascana Daycare.

The U of R submitted a proposal to the provincial government in May seeking \$1 million for the daycare and \$25 million for the residence, to add to the university's total budget of \$60 million for the residence and \$3.8 million for the daycare.

Dave Button, the U of R's vice-president of administration, said the cheque isn't in the mail, but the proposal has garnered positive feedback and questions from staff in the Ministry of Advanced Education as the request works its way through government.

"We're very optimistic and think it mixes very nicely with government priorities," Button said.

He noted the funding request was made after the provincial budget.

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According to the government, the Saskatchewan Party expanded childcare spaces in the province by 35 per cent since 2007 and over the past four years has added more than 650 new beds for students and their families, compared with 60 new units for students from 2000 to 2007 under the NDP.

Broten said the low vacancy rate and high rents in Regina make the need for on-campus affordable housing "all the more pressing."

"The situation is very similar when it comes to childcare," he said.

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In the spring, the provincial government announced 513 new childcare spaces in Saskatchewan. Of those, 110 spaces were allocated to the U of S.

"Zero went to the University of Regina and zero went to the city of Regina," Peterson said.

- reprinted from the Leader-Post

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