

Where have all the children gone? ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

It seems they've gone wherever their parents can find space or afford.

And, according to a recent poll conducted by Canadian Union of Public Employees, more than one quarter of parents are having problems finding space and/or affording it.

In the report titled "Early Learning and Childcare in Newfoundland and Labrador," pollsters found that one third of parents have had difficulty in the past year finding childcare.

And for families with more than one child needing care, that number is even higher, with 42 per cent of families reporting problems in finding childcare.

That's almost half.

To any parents who need to arrange childcare, this should come as no surprise. I was extended the honour of participating in a childcare forum in Corner Brook this past weekend.

Both before the forum when I asked parents what they would like me to talk about and at the forum itself I heard a number of parents complain about lack of services, lack of appropriate services and cost.

For many families in our province, childcare is a patchwork arrangement - mom and dad work shifts so one parent can be home; family members and older siblings provide occasional care; babysitters are called upon; neighbours and friends are recruited.

In many families, all of this is happening at some point during the week. Children are being "watched" by three or four different individuals throughout the week.

But don't our children deserve more than "watching?" Shouldn't all children have the opportunity to be part of a system that provides stability, reliability, and, yes, early learning?

And don't their mothers deserve the chance to work outside the home in permanent, full-time work if they choose?

And finally, don't the people who care for our children - one of the most important jobs in the world - deserve a fair wage and good working conditions?

Can you honestly answer "no" to any of those questions?

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- reprinted from the Western Star

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