

Changes needed to daycare regulations, critics say ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

The province should have more authority to investigate unlicensed daycares, but it should also relax the rules for licensed ones, Doris Gutzer says.

"I find the regulations are very tough on the licensed people, maybe more than they have to be. There have been many good, licensed daycare providers that have quit because of being under too much scrutiny," said Gutzer, who is vice-chair of the Saskatoon branch of the Saskatchewan Association of Child Care Homes.

"It's the way the consultants conduct themselves when they're at the homes. They're looking for absolute perfection, so they kind of make the ladies feel a little bit not good enough."

Gutzer said she knows of some unlicensed daycares that have run low quality, overcrowded businesses, while others make the effort to meet licensed daycare standards.

She doesn't think it's practical to require all daycares to be licensed.

"There are just some great stay-at-home moms who don't want to do that but who could offer some good nurturing and support to children," she said.

As it stands, the province doesn't have the authority to shut down an unlicensed daycare. On Wednesday, Education Minister Russ Marchuk and Social Services Minister June Draude said they were open to considering changes to the rules. The province has received 21 complaints this year about overcrowding in unlicensed daycares.

All options should be on the table when it comes to the province's daycare system - including requiring all daycares to be licensed, NDP early learning and child care critic Danielle Chartier said.

"We need to have a provincewide discussion about child care. It's common sense that if you want parents to work, or parents to go to school, you need to ensure they have quality child care they can trust. That is not the case for so many families right now," Chartier said.

The root of the problem is a lack of quality spaces, and it's up to the government to change it, she said.

Chartier cited a report from Child Care Canada showing that Saskatchewan has the lowest proportion of children in the country (7.6 per cent) for whom there is a regulated child care space. The national average is 20.5 per cent.

-reprinted from the the Star Phoenix

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