

Communities engage in kitchen table conversations on child care

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EXCERPTS:

Winnipeg - The Child Care Coalition of Manitoba held a round table discussion on Sept. 18, inviting parents to talk about the state of childcare in the province. The event True Confessions Roundtable: Parents Talk About Their Childcare Concerns focused on the real challenges parents face in securing affordable, accessible, and quality childcare in Manitoba.

"Voices of parents in Manitoba are not always heard," said Susan Prentice of the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba. "Our discussion today is what you would hear from a group of friends sitting around a kitchen table."

Lori Schroen President of CUPE Local 1543, representing child care workers at several centres in Manitoba, and member of the CUPE National Child Care Working Group highlighted the national Rethink Childcare campaign's goal to reach out to the community to share important stories and experiences that Canadians have with childcare nation-wide.

Priscilla Hatae, a newcomer from Argentina was one of the parents who expressed her frustrations with the length of time it takes to access childcare in the province. "I put my name on all sorts of lists for daycare, no answer," she told the group of nearly 100 people who gathered at the Manitoba Children's Museum. "I was on 38 different lists, and it took two years for me to hear back from them."

Ryan Hubbard, an Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Winnipeg and a father of a young child explained that many are forced into making difficult choices that affects both their family, as well as has a broader impact on the economy. "We have to ask ourselves 'which one of us works, which one of us will stay home,'" said Hubbard. "In this day and age we have so many highly educated women working in critical areas of the economy, and many are forced to stay home because there are simply no childcare spaces available."

Krystal Kayne, a mother and student at Brandon University and the Part-Time/Mature Students' Commissioner for the Brandon University Students' Union and Canadian Federation of Students - Manitoba discussed the impact of inadequate childcare on Manitobans pursuing higher education. "Some university students drop out, others take 10-years of part-time studies because there is simply nowhere affordable to place your child while you are at school," said Kayne.

Professor Hubbard echoed this problem. "It's become routine for students to bring their kids to class," he said. "My daycare cost more than my tuition and we all know how high tuition is," said Prentice.

The roundtable also discussed challenges in finding child care facilities that offered services in French for children to retain their language - a challenge facing many in the Franco-Manitoban community. Additionally, finding childcare facilities that can accommodate children with disabilities is an extra challenge for families who have to balance work, school, and their child's needs - especially in rural communities.

To learn more about the Rethink Childcare campaign or to host a "Kitchen Table" conversation, visit rethinkchildcare.ca

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