

Daycare pitch falls on deaf ears ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

About 100 community activists and daycare professionals handed out teddy bears outside the Centretown Cooperative Daycare on James St. Friday hoping to bend the ears of a dozen MPs and all Ottawa region MPPs.

Their pleas for a national daycare strategy fell on deaf ears because none of the invited MPs and MPPs attended the rally.

Ward 14 city councillor Diane Holmes, who has several daycare centres in her ward, said she was disappointed by the poor turnout.

"I'm here because daycare is a big issue in my ward," Holmes said.

"The daycare centres in Centretown are in a precarious financial situation. The city is discussing amalgamating the administration of all our daycare centres but we need more support from the federal government."

The federal government currently offers families a Universal Child Care Benefit of \$100 a month plus tax deductions for child care-related expenses.

Without a subsidy, daycare costs range from \$1,800 a month for a toddler, to \$600 a month, and eats between 18 to 48% of the average Canadian family's net income.

Single mothers are especially vulnerable.

Finding good quality daycare is another challenge. With approximately one spot for every five children, the odds are stacked against you. Most families face months or years on waiting lists, or, drop out and find other arrangements.

"That means both parents have to work if you have a mortgage," said Carla Tomlinson, who put her three children through daycare.

"This government looks at everything as if it were running a business and not a service," added Tomlinson. "This isn't a personal choice, it's a public issue."

Daycare advocates want the government to create a fully funded national system similar to the provincially-run and funded system in Quebec. Quebec's system charges \$10 a day per child unless your family income is less than \$40,000 and costs the province \$2.2 billion annually. A national daycare network would cost Canadians an estimated \$11 billion annually.

"It's time to rethink child care, our economic future depends," said CUPE local 2204 president and child care worker Athina Basiliadis.

"I learned about being a good parent from my daycare," said Lisa Greaves, a self-employed storeowner with two kids in daycare.

-reprinted from the Ottawa Sun

Region: Ontario ^[2]

Tags: advocacy ^[3]

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