

# Daycare delay worries students <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

When Paulette D'eon found out she was pregnant, she immediately knew child care would be an issue.

The University of Saskatchewan urban planning student put her name on the wait list for the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU) daycare centre on campus right away, months before her daughter Stella was even born.

Fifteen months later, when it was time to return to school, there was still no spot for her.

"September rolled round, and she still was pretty far from being accepted. I kept thinking, 'next month, next month,' " D'eon said.

D'eon considers herself lucky, since her parents live in Saskatoon. She was able to drop Stella off at her dad's office on campus when needed, and she had friends willing to help out. Her spouse, who works, was home with Stella during Paulette's evening classes.

"My family were obviously key. I just can't perceive how anybody would be able to go to school with a child who needs daycare if they don't have family. Literally, I would have dropped out within a couple weeks," she said.

"The fact is, you wouldn't be able to go to school, and if you did, you wouldn't be very successful."

When Kate Snow started nursing courses, her first child had a spot in the USSU centre, but her newborn daughter didn't.

Snow ended up bringing her infant to lectures for almost an entire semester. Any time the child got fussy, she had to take her out to minimize disruption of the class.

"I ended up missing a lot of lecture time, and when I was there I wasn't fully present, because I was distracted," Snow said.

She also had to drop three classes when the professors wouldn't allow her baby in class.

Snow's daughter got into the centre in December - about two years after going on the wait list.

Long waits for daycare are the norm for parents at the U of S. The campus currently has 110 daycare spaces. A 2011 survey found the school would need 800 to meet the demand.

The university had plans for a new, 90-space facility to be opened in 2016, but the U of S board of governors announced a delay at its annual public meeting last week. The board is looking at ways to reduce costs, including the possibility of renovating an existing space on campus.

"The issue right now is we've got a major funding gap between what we have raised for the project and how much the project is going to cost," said U of S vicepresident of finances and resources Greg Fowler on Wednesday.

This week, the USSU and the Graduate Students' Association called on the university to follow through with what they saw as a commitment to new child care spaces by 2016.

"They promised this years ago," said Nour Abouhamra, vice-president of student affairs for USSU and a member of the university's child care committee.

The university already received a \$1.1-million grant from the provincial government for the project. That money is currently set aside in a fund, according to Fowler. It will have to be returned to the province if work on a new facility or renovations to an existing space do not start by 2015.

It's inaccurate to say the board made a commitment to the new facility, Fowler said.

"We never had a previous commitment. What we had was a 'board one' approval to proceed with the plan," he said, stating that a second approval was needed once the plan was fully fleshed out.

Abouhamra took issue with Fowler's statement.

"If they weren't committed, why would they spend all this time and effort on the design and planning of a new building? The university, at that time, was committed, and the students are committed to this project," Abouhamra said.

The board of governors will revisit the project at its May 27 meeting.

-reprinted from the Star Phoenix

**Region:** Saskatchewan <sup>[2]</sup>

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