

Child care a concern for province ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Ensuring the quality, sufficiency and affordability of regulated child care services for families with young children remains a top priority for government.

That's according to Child, Youth and Family Services Minister Sandy Collins.

Collins was responding an article in the July 28 edition of The Labradorian, where two mothers - including Rhea Dale of Happy Valley-Goose Bay - were expressing their frustration at the lack of child care spaces in the community, with both private and subsidized daycares.

Although Dale's three-year-old was finally accepted into one of Happy Valley-Goose Bay's daycares - after being on a waitlist for most of her life - she couldn't find a babysitter for one-year-old Nathaniel.

"Nobody wants one-year-olds," she said. "To get infant care at that age is impossible."

Minister Collins said government's 10-year child care strategy provides a planned, systematic approach for the growth and enhancement of child care services across the province, especially in underserved areas and in areas with a need to strengthen labour force participation.

"Since 2003, our government has increased the number of regulated child care spaces by almost 70 per cent from 4,609 spaces in 2003 to 7,770 spaces in 2014," he said.

"With regard to Labrador specifically, there are currently approximately 15 regulated child care centres representing 375 spaces and less than five regulated family child care homes representing five spaces."

Collins noted government is continuing to strengthen child care services throughout the province including the Child Care Capacity Initiative provides start-up grants for non-profit community-based organizations offering regulated child care services; and the Family Child Care Initiative which provides regulated child care spaces with an emphasis on spaces for infants, as well as an opportunity for individuals to enter and remain in the labour market either by becoming a regulated family child care provider or by availing of regulated family child care spaces.

He noted CYFS also provides support to both commercial and non-profit child care services through such initiatives as the Inclusion Supports Program which provides additional staff or funded spaces to accommodate all children in regular child care programming; the Child Care Services Subsidy which assists eligible families with child care rates in a licensed child care centre or regulated family child care home; and the Early Learning and Child Care Supplement which provides qualified early childhood educators working directly with children in a homeroom to receive a total annual supplement of \$6,660, and qualified program operators to receive a total annual supplement of \$10,000.

"In addition, CYFS will be implementing a new voluntary Operating Grant Program in the coming months which will provide funding to eligible regulated child care centres that set child care rates at the provincial subsidy rate and meet program criteria," said Collins.

"We welcome any non-profit organizations or individuals interested in opening child care services in their communities, as well as commercial centres and parents to contact their local CYFS offices to learn more about the programs and services available."

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