

Wage top up for N.W.T daycare workers now 8 months late ^[1]

Author: McMillan, Elizabeth

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EXCERPTS

Daycare workers in the Northwest Territories still haven't received a wage subsidy the government promised in February.

The money is part of a plan to encourage more qualified early childhood educators, but the program to deliver it is still being developed.

"The subsidy is a lot of extra money for people that don't make a ton of money," says David Wasylciw, chair of the N.W.T. Montessori Society.

But Wasylciw says his organization has been waiting months for information, and staff are wondering when they'll get paid.

"I don't think anyone predicted it would be October and there's still no extra wage."

He says recruiting qualified people for a job that pays a below-average salary is already hard enough.

"We've done some hiring with the promise of the increase coming. It hasn't happened yet."

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment says when it starts, the wage top-up will be retroactive from last April.

No one from the department was available for an interview.

\$500K program still in development

In February's budget, half a million dollars was flagged for wage and training incentives. It would apply to licensed daycares, but not home daycares.

The department has been debating how to administer the program. An early proposal suggested increasing hourly wages by \$2 this year and by up to \$6 an hour next year. The latest has employees receive a grant four times a year.

People working full-time would receive \$1,000 every quarter this year, less if they're working part-time.

Next year, the subsidy would vary depending on education. People with degrees would receive \$3,000, less if they have a certificate or diploma. People working full-time with no education would receive \$1,500.

MLA Wendy Bisaro says this government has a track record of announcing money for programs that aren't designed yet.

"I would think we'd have at least half of the program developed before we announce the money," she says. "Often we have an idea, we put a dollar figure, then either we don't have the staff to develop it and something else takes precedence and it gets shoved to the back of the list."

If the current proposal goes ahead, daycare operators will be responsible for signing off on the hours employees work.

The money won't apply to casual staff, daycare administrators or cooks.

Read online at CBC News ^[2]

Region: Northwest Territories ^[3]

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