

Concerns rise about future of daycares in federal buildings ^[1]

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Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 8 Dec 2014

AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

Several Ottawa daycare centres operating out of federal government buildings worry about their financial future after a decision to rescind the policy to subsidize daycare rents.

In the early 1990s, the federal government helped establish workplace daycare centres in federal buildings across the country, providing a full-rent subsidy as long as 70 per cent of the spaces were used by parents working in the public service.

At one point, about a dozen daycare centres existed for public servants from Edmonton to Shawinigan, Que., including five in Ottawa.

The Treasury Board recently rescinded its policy to subsidize daycare rents, putting the onus on individual departments to "establish and maintain such facilities when they are a sound investment for the well-being of employees and the organization."

Local daycare already closed

On Dec. 1, the Tupper Tots daycare facility in the Sir Charles Tupper Building on Riverside Drive announced its closure.

The Tupper Tots board of directors said the money problems began when the federal subsidy was cancelled and the daycare was asked to pay more than \$230,000 a year in rent.

"I'm angry with ... the federal government for basically turning their back on their own employees who needed access to childcare," said Shellie Bird of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, which represents daycare workers at Tupper Tots.

The childcare program at Tunney's Pasture recently renegotiated a five-year lease with Public Works and Government Services Canada. However, one worker told CBC News the rent will double over the next two years and questions remain about whether the daycare will survive at that location over the long term.

A potential rent increase is also a worry for the daycare centre at the Sunflower Co-op, operated out of a federal building on Montreal Road.

"Children on the Hill," a program used by bureaucrats, politicians and members of the press gallery, currently operates rent-free out of a building on Parliament Hill. The arrangement with that facility dates back to the 1980s and the current board president doesn't know how long the building operator, Public Works, will continue this arrangement.

Union lobbying government to protect centres

The Public Service Alliance of Canada, which represents a majority of federal workers, said it sent letters to government officials months ago seeking assurances that workplace child care centres would not only be protected, but expanded.

"If you believe in daycare, then put your money where your mouth is and say, 'here's a model that works and can work in the public and private sector,'" said a union vice-president, Larry Rousseau.

"I think that's what we're supposed to be doing, providing a model to the rest of the country."

The federal Public Works department has not responded to interview and information requests regarding daycare programs in federal buildings.

Region: Canada ^[3]

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Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/14/12/concerns-rise-about-future-daycares-federal-buildings> [2]

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/concerns-rise-about-future-of-daycares-in-federal-buildings-1.2862351> [3]

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