

# Saint John dad fights for child care for autistic son <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

A Saint John man says he wants to work, but the provincial government won't help him get two hours of certified child care for his special needs son.

Mike Brown is a single father, whose 14-year-old son is autistic. His son also wears a cochlear implant to help correct for deafness.

He was offered a job as a labourer in November and he was ready to take the position.

The boy's grandfather was set to come over to the apartment in the mornings to help him get ready for school. But that plan fell apart suddenly.

"My dad had a stroke on a Saturday, so I had to call in Monday and you know, cancel the job," he said.

Brown said he can't start a job until he knows his son is properly cared for when he is away.

"I would like to have a certified person come and do that, not someone off Kijiji or just someone down the street," he said.

"Just in case something happens. I just want to make sure he has a qualified person to do that."

Brown's union confirmed on Monday that he has been offered employment, but labourer jobs start at 7 a.m.

The company that provides after-school services to Brown's son says it could send someone early, but that would only be covered with the provincial government's approval.

Without provincial funding, the cost is \$18 per hour, which Brown said he cannot afford until he gets back on his feet.

The Saint John father said if he was on social assistance, the provincial government would help see his son got into daycare for eight hours a day.

But since he's trying to work, he said he feels nothing is being done to help him or his son.

Ken Pike, the social policy director for the New Brunswick Association for Community Living, said he's seen similar situations to the one faced by Brown.

"Sometimes the choices are, 'I'm going to drop out of the labour market or drop out of the workforce because I have to be home,'" Pike said.

"We see that often in single-parent families. They just can't balance trying to work and raise a child with a disability. So sometimes those families will end up on social assistance."

**Region:** New Brunswick <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** special needs <sup>[4]</sup>

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