

Among many daycare issues are cost and availability ^[1]

Author: Beattie, Samantha

Source: Guelph Tribune

Format: Article

Publication Date: 24 Feb 2015

AVAILABILITY

[Read Online](#) ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Even early childhood educator Ashley Portt cannot afford or find space in a regulated childcare centre for her two children.

Portt's five-year-old is enrolled in full-day kindergarten, but the school doesn't have an extended day program. When her two-year-old was born, infant care was way too expensive, especially after taking a maternity leave.

So, Portt did what many parents have to do. She turned to a neighbour to care for her kids while she works. "I went the private route because I had to, but I found a good person I can rely on," said Portt after Thursday's Community Forum on Childcare.

Portt was among about 75 mothers, early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers who attended the forum at the YMCA-YWCA to discuss what needs to happen to improve childcare in Ontario.

The expert panelists were Martha Friendly, director of the Childcare Resources and Research Unit non-profit organization; Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development scholar Zeenat Janmohamed; and Lorna Reid, director of the University of Guelph's Childcare and Learning Centre.

"Canada's early childhood care and education is fragmented like a patchwork quilt," said Friendly. "Parents face limited options and often resort to unregulated childcare because it's the only thing they can find. They pay sky-high fees for uneven quality."

In Guelph and Wellington there are about 12,500 children up to age four, said Reid. In the city there are 50 licensed centres, and in the county there are 20 centres. Both also offer regulated home care.

"One of the major challenges facing parents is the amount of infant care. It is appallingly low," said Reid. Of the 70 centres, only 11 have spaces for infants.

There is a lot more care for children in junior and senior kindergarten, even though Ontario now offers full-day kindergarten and many schools have extended day programs.

Regardless, many centres still have long wait lists for all age groups, said Reid.

The reason why demand and supply aren't matching up is because the federal government has no Early Childhood Education policy and the provincial government's policy is weak, said Friendly.

That means not-for-profit, public and private sectors all run childcare centres. This results in uneven quality and an unstable market.

"Childcare is a commodity, not a service," said Friendly. "Parents have to pay huge amounts in fees just so the centres can break even and keep running."

Canada spends only one-quarter of the amount recommended for developed countries on childcare, said Friendly. It's missing out on the benefits.

Early childhood education is proven to better prepare children for kindergarten learning than unregulated home care does, said the 2014 Early Childhood Education Report by Toronto's Atkinson Centre.

Childcare also helps address income inequality, because mothers can go back to work sooner.

In a province wide study spearheaded by Janmohamed, it was found a main reason low-income parents weren't working was because they couldn't afford childcare.

Ontario provides subsidies to lower-income families, but it's often not enough.

"Low-income families are unable to cover the gap between the fees that programs charge and the subsidies governments provide, forcing them to settle for unregulated options," said the early childhood report.

The panel experts all agreed this year's federal election is the time to push for a national childcare policy to address these issues.

Right now, the New Democratic Party of Canada is the only one to have a child care platform, with a goal that parents won't pay more than \$15 a day per child.

The Conservatives have tabled income splitting and small benefits parents can apply for, both of which don't help low and middle-income families, Friendly said. The Liberals have not released a childcare platform so far.

"Share what we're saying to your husbands and families," said Janmohamed to the all-female audience. "This isn't just a women's problem. This is society's problem."

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: affordability ^[4]

accessibility ^[5]

spaces ^[6]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/02/among-many-daycare-issues-are-cost-and-availability>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/02/among-many-daycare-issues-are-cost-and-availability> [2]

<https://www.guelphmercury.com/guelph-on-news/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/accessibility> [6]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/spaces>