

U of S moves to meet child-care demand ^[1]

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The University of Saskatchewan has broken ground on a \$4.6-million, 90-space daycare to help students with young children.

Political science student Tanya Napper, whose fiveand seven-year-old daughters have both attended the existing student union day care, said balancing childcare and studies is a challenge.

"We did go through the exercise, my husband and I, looking for other places. Sometimes it was scary, because you saw that you would never leave your child there. Then it becomes a decision, 'Does that mean I can't go to school, does that mean I can't hold a full-time job?' " The new spaces will allow university students to pursue an education while their children also prepare for school, she said.

"It not only fosters the parents to have a future, but also those kids to have a future, starting them off on the right foot."

Outgoing student union president Max FineDay said he made child care a priority when he was first elected, after hearing disappointing stories of parents having to drop out because they couldn't find close, affordable options.

"This new facility is going to go so far in hopefully bringing some of those folks we lost back to the university," he said.

The new daycare is expected to open next spring. When that happens, the campus will have a total of 200 childcare spaces - 75 per cent of which will be reserved for students, and 25 per cent for staff - with hopes of growing to 360 within five to seven years.

On a per-student basis, that would put U of S among the top providers of childcare spots among Canadian universities, said Patti Mc-Dougall, the administration's lead on the child-care expansion project.

The university also is considering incorporating a child-care centre into its family student housing plans for the College Quarter.

However, an estimated 800 students need child care, and bridging that gap will require some creativity.

"I don't think we'd ever be in a position to offer a spot to every single person that wants a spot - remember, we've got faculty and staff as well who want spots," Mc-Dougall said.

Some students would prefer child care where they live, rather than on campus, she noted. The university is looking at partnerships throughout the city, such as another organization to run a child-care facility, or working with licensed family home settings.

FineDay said the university and the Saskatoon Tribal Council, for example, could form a partnership to offer daycare that focuses on indigenous cultures.

"We're uniquely placed here to do something different, do something cool in providing that needed child care."

Region: Saskatchewan ^[2]

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