

Daycare pain ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Sandra Finnamore wants her toddler son, Colton, to have the best possible care while she and her husband are at work, but this comes with a hefty pricetag.

She spends \$32 a day for Colton to attend a private daycare in Stratford. In P.E.I., private daycares have higher rates than the provincially funded Early Years Centres.

Finnamore says she and her husband are not rich, but she is fortunate to have the option to send her son to a quality childcare centre.

"Obviously we wish it wasn't so expensive because it would make such a big difference for other things that we'd like to do," Finnamore said. "But it was very important for us to have a really good place for him to go. For us, it's the most important thing."

However, these costs make childcare far too expensive for many low-income families or single parents across the province.

There are waiting lists for placements in the provincial Early Years Centres, but those daycares are only marginally more affordable. And in P.E.I. there is a major shortage of infant spaces. Island women often put their names on waiting lists immediately after discovering they are expecting a child.

"This limits choices for families. It makes it challenging for families to decide to go back to work," says Mandy MacNevin-Reynolds, a front-line childcare worker and member of the Early Childhood Development Association.

"A lot of the times mothers who may be in the workforce may have to choose to stay home longer with their children than they had anticipated because choice is just not there. And it sometimes means they have to take childcare that maybe was not their first choice."

That's why MacNevin-Reynolds and childcare workers and advocates are calling for the federal government to provide financial support for childcare across Canada.

They organized a 'Let's chalk it up for childcare' day in Stratford Friday where children drew colourful images in the pavement with sidewalk chalk as their caregivers and association members spoke of the need for more affordable care for all Island families.

"I think a big part of the solution would be a national child care funding platform," MacNevin-Reynolds said.

She noted it is a very relevant issue in Prince Edward Island, with so many single mothers and the increasing number of parents raising children alone due to their spouse working in western Canada.

"It puts strain on those families because maybe mom can't go back to work because maybe she can't find a quality space or can't afford it. And we want young families to grow and thrive on Prince Edward Island."

- reprinted from The Guardian

Region: Prince Edward Island ^[3]

Tags: affordability ^[4]

quality ^[5]

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