

Province to add 900 child care spaces, give daycare workers 2 per cent raise ^[1]

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Source: Winnipeg Free Press

Format: Article

Publication Date: 4 Jun 2015

AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The province announced 900 new daycare spaces and a raise for workers Thursday, but Premier Greg Selinger acknowledged wait lists for care aren't shrinking.

Roughly 12,000 children are listed on the province's central registry, several hundred more than two years ago. Daycares all over Winnipeg say they have hundreds of children on their internal lists, and, it's impossible to know if wait times are shrinking. Manitoba's Auditor General noted this week in a report that the province's computer system can't measure wait times for parents, so they can't be reported publicly.

Speaking at Little Saints Learning Centre in St. Vital, which is opening a second location with provincial funding, Selinger said the number of new families moving to Manitoba and a strong economy are making it hard to make progress.

"If the list started going down that would be a positive thing," said Selinger. "But it's probably going to continue with strong demand because we have more people moving here."

As part of a previously announced five-year daycare plan, Selinger announced funding for another 900 child care spaces in 14 centres this year — most in and around Winnipeg but some in Morden, Anola and other rural locations.

And, early childhood educators will get a two-percent raise in January, part of a planned series of wage hikes meant to curb the shortage of daycare staff.

Manitoba's child care system is widely seen as the best in Canada next to Quebec's, especially due to its affordability, the wages paid to early childhood educators and the number of new spaces created yearly. But, parents are still confounded by a shortage of spaces and quality is uneven.

Earlier this week, the province's auditor general released an update on 25 recommendations made more than two years ago to improve the province's oversight and management of child care. Only six had been fully implemented when auditors asked for an update last summer. Among those, the AG noted the province will not be able measure and report wait times for child care spaces.

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Region: Manitoba ^[3]

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