

Pilot Butte, Sask. Early Learning Centre hopes to ease child care wait list issue ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A new child care facility opening in Pilot Butte, Sask. this fall says it hopes to ease the demand for parents who sit on lengthy waiting lists.

Nancy Seidlitz's son Jason is only eight months old. He's not yet in daycare and so far, there's no option in sight. The new mom began searching for infant child care when he was two months old.

"So far we're on seven wait lists for the city and surrounding area hopeful for one to open before the end of the year but nothing yet."

Like many moms around the province, she's playing the waiting game. Nancy would like to return to work as a nurse and prefers a licensed child care facility because of the curriculum involved. She has also reached out to a few day homes and is waiting for their reply.

"For [Regina] we haven't got a timeline at all, in town here in Balgonie it was suggested [the wait will be] two and a half to three years."

Her advice to other moms is to start planning as soon as you're pregnant.

Nancy and her husband both work in Regina, and are flexible about where Jason is dropped off on their way to work. One spot that is on her radar, is Pilot Butte.

Sheila Pelletier is a consultant for the Pilot Butte Early Learning Centre (PBELC) which is planning to open its door late fall. The centre which is currently under construction in the New Horizon Business Centre will eventually have space for 90 children and will be the town's only licensed child care facility.

Pelletier says the demand is there. Pilot Butte is the only town on Highway 1 from Regina to Indian Head without licensed care. After a formal community assessment, the project began.

"We decided to make an application to the ministry of education for funding to build the child care center in Pilot Butte,"

The Ministry of Education did not have their budget increased this year, so the PBELC was unable to receive funding. So, like Seidlitz, they wait.

"We were put on a waitlist for future funding," Pelletier said.

The Pilot Butte Early Learning Centre will still open due to private funding while they await government funding, but opening without it means they forfeit the capital (startup) funding that the ministry of education may typically give to new licensed facilities.

So for now, this centre will open to meet demand, largely due to private investors.

Since 2007, child care availability across the province has increased 53 per cent. And nine joint-use-schools are currently in development, set to open in 2017.

"Three in Regina, four in Saskatoon, One in Warman and one in Martensville. Each of those will incorporate a 90 space child care facility. So that's 810 spaces in total," Cindy Jeanes said, Director of Early Learning and Child Care Service Delivery with the Ministry of Education.

Jeanes also advises parents to sign up for infant care wait lists while they are still pregnant.

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