

Wait for child care at 'all-time high': advocate ^[1]

Author: Geary, Aidan

Source: Winnipeg Free Press

Format: Article

Publication Date: 24 Aug 2016

AVAILABILITY

Read online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

The wait list for Manitoba child care has never been longer, and a child-care advocate is calling on the province and Ottawa to take action.

Pat Wege, executive director of the Manitoba Child Care Association, said the current wait list in the province has reached an "all-time high" at 14,168 children signed up on the online child-care registry.

That number, taken from a Family Services briefing document dated April 19, is actually more than 700 names lower than the most recent provincial count, which sits at 14,872 as of July 31, Families Minister Scott Fielding said.

"Really, in the 21st century, most families need some form of non-parental child care, whether it's full-time, part-time, seasonal, occasional, whatever," Wege said. "If they can't get it, they can't go to work, they can't find a job."

Since the online child-care registry was introduced by the NDP government in 2011, the wait list has continued to climb, Wege said, although how long people actually wait depends on their geographical location, the age of the children and which centre they choose.

With not enough new daycares opening to provide a solution, Wege said it's necessary provinces and Ottawa work together to find one.

"The shortage of child care is common right across the country," she said.

"We're looking to federal and provincial governments to tackle this issue. It's been more than 45 years since the Status of Women commission first recommended a national child-care program... and here we are still talking about it, 46 years later."

In January, the Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission published its own report with a string of recommendations, including the creation of five children's councils across the province, a revision of the current subsidy program to a sliding scale based on annual income tax assessment and the immediate funding of all new spaces created by existing child-care centres.

Wege said the report and its recommendations should be a "road map" for Manitoba's Progressive Conservative government.

"We need a comprehensive plan and now it's in the hands of the new government, and it's up to them to take it forward," she said.

In response to a Free Press request for comment, Fielding wrote in an email the province is developing a strategy.

"Families, child-care providers and other stakeholders have told us that extensive periods of consultation by the previous government failed to deliver solutions," he wrote. "Neither did simply throwing money at problems."

"As a new government, we are in the process of reviewing the (early learning and child-care) framework to develop an implementation plan that is realistic, practical and sustainable to significantly reduce the wait list and keep it down into the future," he added.

"This is a comprehensive process, and we continue to work collaboratively with experts and front-line workers in this field."

Wege said she's optimistic about the future for child care.

"We're not hearing much from the new government so far, but I have met with the minister, had a good conversation about priorities going forward," she said.

-reprinted from Winnipeg Free Press

Region: Manitoba ^[3]

Tags: access ^[4]

wait list fees ^[5]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/08/wait-child-care-all-time-high-advocate> [2] <https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/wait-for-child-care-at-all-time-high-advocate-391122761.html> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7857> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/access> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/wait-list-fees>