

Waiting list for child care in Manitoba at all-time high^[1]

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Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 24 Aug 2016

AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The waiting list for child care in Manitoba is at an all-time high, according to figures released by the Pallister government.

As of July 31, 14,872 children are on the list. That's up from about 12,000 last year.

"I am not surprised it has continued to go up. It's a high number and getting higher all the time. An all-time high," said Pat Wege, executive director of the Manitoba Child Care Association.

The online child-care registry was brought in by the NDP government in 2011.

Wege says even though the former government was opening between 900 and 1,200 new spaces a year, demand was always higher.

What's not in the latest numbers is the length of time people are on the list for, she said.

"It depends on the age of the child, where you live and where the program you prefer is. The demographics may have changed in the neighbourhood, and some family child care homes may have openings while the child care centres don't. For the most part the wait is probably years, and I bet there are some people who don't get in at all," she said.

Report is road map

Earlier this year, the Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission published a report, outlining a number of recommendations. Some of them include revising the current subsidy program to a sliding scale to improve access and the immediate funding of all new spaces created by existing child care centres. But the then-NDP government lost the election to the Progressive Conservatives.

"They mapped out a plan for child care moving forward. The new government has to look at this and consider it seriously," said Wege, "we never had a comprehensive plan before."

Wege has met with Families Minister Scott Fielding.

"It was a good first meeting, ideas were put on the table. Now we need an action plan," she said.

Provincial strategy

In a written statement, Fielding said the province is working on that.

"As a new government, we are in the process of reviewing the ELCC (Early Learning and Child-Care) framework to develop an implementation plan that is realistic, practical and sustainable to significantly reduce the waitlist and keep it down into the future. Our mandate is to remove red tape, improve access to quality and affordable child care and create an environment where early childhood educators will thrive. This is a comprehensive process and we continue to work collaboratively with experts and front line workers in this field," he said.

Wege says she wants to see the political will, both provincially and federally, to deliver on a plan now. She says if politicians don't get a handle on the numbers now, they will continue to balloon.

"We haven't even talked about newcomers to Manitoba. Who is tracking the numbers there in terms of what their child care needs are?"

-reprinted from CBC News

Region: Manitoba^[3]

Tags: spaces^[4]

access^[5]

Links

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