



## **CHILD CARE NEWS: JULY 14, 2010**

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Due to lack of interest expressed by parents, the Upper Grand District School Board will not offer the extended day program at 13 schools where full day junior and senior kindergarten classes will take place.

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### **1. Province injects millions into summer school amid cuts; Ministry of Education sends 'mixed message,' says VSB board chair Patti Bacchus**

Vancouver Courier - Wed Jul 14 2010

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Byline: Megan Stewart - Source: Vancouver Courier

The Vancouver School Board cut \$17 million from its 2010/11 budget, laying off teachers and cutting programs, and it will consider school closures in the fall, but the Ministry of Education still pumped \$4.7 million into Vancouver summer school to fund mostly recreation and prep classes.

Despite seeing "a big cut in everything" across the district, VSB chair Patti Bacchus says the summer program sends a "mixed message" to her board in light of the ministry's demand that every service be maximized for generating revenue.

"They're telling us to squeeze profit out of just about everything we can, regardless of the purpose it serves," said Bacchus, pointing to childcare programs as one service she said the Ministry believes can turn a greater profit.

"But on the other hand, they're offering up possibly programs that aren't required toward graduation at no cost," she said, adding that the board does not have a position on whether the summer programming should be funded by the Ministry of Education.

One in 10 classes offered through the VSB continuing education summer program is a core academic course such as senior math and English that is taken for credit and used toward graduation by teenagers and adults. Otherwise, the majority of classes are month-long elementary and secondary preparatory courses, not unlike summer camps available through community centres, and are led by professional teachers.

Classes tied to curriculum-based learning outcomes are free of charge, except for a \$30 deposit, and range from art lessons, computer literacy, and core learning elements such as reading and writing to physical education classes, some of which have already been cancelled because of low enrollment.

There are also gifted programs, ESL classes and courses such as Getting Ready for Grade 1 where five and six year olds can "get a preview of what to expect in Grade 1 reading, writing and math," and Zine: Produce Your Own Magazine for grades 8 and 9. Courses not tied to curriculum-based learning outcomes range from \$109 to \$330 per student.

From innovative lesson plans to core skill building, summer schooling does benefit students, said Bacchus but, "our chief concern is always the funding of our regular programming."

Peter Andrade manages the summer skills development program for the school board and said the non-credit classes "regurgitate what students have learned in the past at that grade level" but nonetheless offer "enrichment learning and preview learning" to ease their transition to a higher grade level in September.

"We're trying to provide students with the opportunity, whether it's sports or academic disciplines, to take a discipline that they are planning on taking in the upcoming school year," said Andrade. "I would say 90 per cent of the courses would be in the realm of being preview courses."

Ksena Tatomir is a physical education teacher who played varsity hockey and now runs the Britannia Hockey Academy. The summer physical education class Focusing on Ice Hockey didn't attract enough students this first year and was cancelled, causing Tatomir to believe few parents know about the range of classes.

For working parents who don't have time off, the summer classes mean their child is supervised, exercising and learning with a group of peers, she stressed. "And, again, it's free."

## **2. Stony Plain daycare ordered to close; Parents scramble amid allegations of forced feedings, mistreatment**

Edmonton Journal - Wed Jul 14 2010

Page: A3 - Section: News

Byline: Keith Gerein - Dateline: EDMONTON

Source: Edmonton Journal, with files from Trish Audette

Forced feedings, including one occasion when a child was made to eat their own vomit, physical discipline and long waits to use the bathroom are among the abuses children suffered at a Stony Plain daycare that has been ordered to close, provincial investigators say.

The Stony Day Care Centre must shut its doors by July 24, sending about 60 sets of parents scrambling to find new accommodations for their children.

A spokesman for Alberta Children and Youth Services couldn't remember when the province last revoked the licence of a private daycare.

"It's hasn't happened in the last two years," Trevor Coulombe said. "The matter has to be pretty serious for us to take that step."

He said Stony Plain RCMP have been made aware of the allegations, which came to light last month after an employee at the daycare complained to the ministry.

Ministry investigators made three visits to the centre in late June, then filed a report on July 9 that "confirmed" a number of accusations of inappropriate staff behaviour toward children.

Among the mistreatment cited was unsuitable discipline, including biting, shaming and hitting by caregivers.

Two kindergarten-aged children were "humiliated" for toileting accidents, and there were cases of children being made to eat more than they could handle, the investigators' report states.

"One child was force-fed until they had vomited, which was then mixed into the food and the child was forced to eat it," it said.

Investigators say they learned children were also forced to sit for long periods of time, including waiting up to 90 minutes to eat and 30 minutes to use the bathroom. In addition, a staff member was found to be smoking around the children. On June 15, two toddlers were left inside unattended while the rest of the group went outside for an activity, the report says.

Allegations in the report would violate the daycare's licence agreement, which states staff must not "inflict or cause to be inflicted any form of physical punishment, verbal or physical degradation or emotional deprivation," the investigators say.

The daycare will remain open until July 24, in part to allow parents time to find alternate accommodations, Coulombe said. In the meantime, he said ministry staff are on-site daily to ensure children are being treated properly. The daycare's owner, who could not be reached for comment Tuesday, has appealed the government's order.

Coulombe said complaints related to the daycare's feeding practices were raised on two previous occasions, in February 2008 and August 2009. In both cases, the ministry worked with the centre's staff and the situation improved, he said.

However, the latest allegations were more serious. Given the past issues, investigators worried that inappropriate care might reoccur, he said.

Government staff plan to hold a meeting Thursday in Stony Plain to help parents find alternate places to take their children.

Currently, there is only one other daycare in Stony Plain. Jagg Chana, who owns the Loving to Learn Children's Centre, said he has received at least 20 phone calls from worried parents, most of whom he had to turn away.

Chana is working to find a short-term solution to help parents.

Some parents, however, are continuing to take their children to Stony Day Care Centre, saying they don't believe the investigators' findings.

"I think most of the allegations are pretty much bogus," Sherry Lynn Carey told Global News on Tuesday.

Parent Steve Henderson said his wife and her family use the daycare. "We've had no problems. It's been golden. Everything has been great here."

NDP critic Rachel Notley linked the case to what she believes is a severe shortage of childcare spaces in Alberta.

Such a shortage means the government is more likely to keep open a facility even if it knows there may be problems, she said.

The amount of money that the provincial government puts into childcare is low compared with most other provinces in Canada, said Bill Moore-Kilgannon, the executive director of Public Interest Alberta.

Moore-Kilgannon said low funding means wages for daycare workers are low, there is a high rate of turnover, and sometimes people hired are not adequately trained.

"I guess what we're appealing for is a much more quality system that isn't rooted in a market approach, but that is built to make sure that all children are getting the education and care they need."

### **3. Daycare loses licence after string of complaints**

The Edmonton Sun - Wed Jul 14 2010

Page: 10 - Section: News

Byline: EDMONTON SUN

The province has revoked a Stony Plain daycare's licence after disturbing complaints that workers mistreated children, in one case, forcing a child to eat vomit.

In a cancellation notice to Stony Day Care Centre, Children and Youth Services said there was evidence that children were force-fed until they vomited, then, in one instance, vomit was mixed with food and a child was forced to eat it.

It also said children were inappropriately disciplined with biting, shaming and hitting. Two children were humiliated after they had toilet accidents, the report says.

The government was aware of complaints against the daycare in 2008 and again in August 2009, which is a cause for concern, said NDP MLA Rachel Notley .

"The fact that they stayed open highlights that we're still dealing with a dramatic shortage of child-care services," she said.

"We have to make the investment to make quality, affordable, accessible child care so our kids can be in a safe, nurturing environment."

The daycare was issued the closure notice July 9. It can operate for 15 days after that with daily monitoring to allow parents time to make other arrangements.

### **4. Flexibility, perks draw and retain employees**

The Telegram (St. John's) - Mon Jul 12 2010

Page: C1 - Section: Business

Byline: Derek Sankey - Source: Canwest News Service

When Tara Murray was looking for a job, a flexible employer was essential to balancing the care of her three-year-old twins. So when she found a company that was just opening its new day-care centre - Calgary-based Newalta Corp. - it clinched the offer for employment.

"It was actually one of the key things when I was interviewing for this position ... that would allow me to balance my life with my work," says Murray. "It's very beneficial to me."

She spends extra time with them on the drive to work in the morning and eats lunch with them,

dropping in to see them when she can throughout the day. "It's definitely a lot of work (having twins) but having them come with me to work and dropping them off at this phenomenal facility is very easy," says Murray.

Newalta, a waste and environmental services firm, is among the group of companies going on a hiring spree right now to fuel its annual growth of about 20 per cent. The job market is getting more competitive again and between growth and increasing retirements, management views work-life balance as being woven into the company's culture.

"We have a lot of programs to help employees create the balance they want to be successful in all parts of their life," says Dalene Friesen, director of human resources at Newalta.

In addition to the day-care centre, there is a large central lounge and kitchen with healthy foods prepared each day by the chef, a fitness facility open to spouses and adult children of employees, various Pilates and yoga classes, not to mention a newly launched on-site massage therapy service.

Flexible work arrangements, an extra five days off during the summer in addition to regular vacation time, paid seasonal days off during Christmas amounting to about two weeks, early office closures prior to statutory holidays, part-time work arrangements, retirement transition programs, a broad leave of absence program, an expanded EAP program - the list goes on.

"We really build (flexibility) into our culture," says Friesen.

Being seen as an employer of choice that values the concept of work-life balance sets them apart as the company continues in hiring and retention mode.

But for many workers, stress and lack of time to manage their responsibilities continues to have a significant impact on their lives.

A report by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) found women face more time pressures than men - 23 per cent versus 17 per cent - while single parents with young children are the most pressed for time.

"This is not just a simple case of individuals needing to better manage their time," said Roy Romanow, chair of the CIW advisory board, in the report.

"We need family-friendly policies for all workers and more community resources and supports for seniors."

He advocates public policies that support leisure and cultural activities, pointing out that 28 per cent of Canadian workers have responsibilities for both child care and elder care, according to the study.

CIW was launched to measure and track quality of life in Canada related to physical health and well-being, social, cultural and environmental indicators.

Ramping up to a 45-child capacity in coming weeks, Newalta's daycare facility will use the nearby Haultain Park - the company recently funded its restoration downtown - just as workers are encouraged to use it as an outdoor workspace.

Beyond their regular benefits package, employees enjoy family days where they go out to various activities and parties - most recently to a ranch south of Calgary.

As more employers add perks like an on-site daycare facility, Friesen predicts employees will gravitate to those companies.

Murray's primary focus is working for an employer who understands the need to balance her life and professional priorities as a new mother.

"I was upfront about saying I had two children," she says. "They are the most important things other than my career that I want to focus on."

We have a lot of programs to help employees create the balance they want to be successful in all parts of their life ... We really build (flexibility) into our culture.

Dalene Friesen, director of human resources at Newalta.

## **5. Catholic board balances budget;**

The Niagara Falls Review - Fri Jul 9 2010

Page: A6 - Section: News

Byline: KAESHA FORAND, QMI AGENCY; - Dateline: WELLAND

Niagara Catholic District School Board will enter the upcoming school year with a balanced budget.

During a special council meeting held Wednesday night, trustees voted in favour of the budget that takes into account an enrolment decrease of 300 students and the launch of the early learning kindergarten program with its \$240,806,939 budget for 2010-11.

The board receives \$46.7 million from education taxes, \$186.7 million from education grants and \$7.2 million from tuition fees and other revenue.

Education director John Crocco said the only spending that is over budget is in administration where the board can spend 15% more than its budget. However, he said those expenditures will be aligned within the coming years to meet Ministry of Education requirements.

Come September, the board is expected to have 14,020 elementary students and 910 teachers and 8,307 secondary students and 542 teachers.

Business superintendent Larry Reich said to accommodate the decrease in students, staffing levels are being decreased by attrition, meaning retiring teachers are not being replaced to avoid layoffs and maintain existing staff.

He also said the ministry has eliminated a 15% buffer with overall spending, so staff had to ensure expenditures are in line with funding. On that note, the board will have to be selective with future projects.

Throughout Niagara, some staffing and educational resource increases have been made to

accommodate full-day kindergarten.

Plant controller James Woods said the board will work toward ensuring all buildings are barrier-free and said new cleaning products, methods and dispensing systems will be implemented so "schools will be cleaner, greener, healthier and we will save some money." New boilers, lighting and windows will all be essential for the board to achieve its goal of reducing facility energy consumption by 5%.

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## **6. Extended day program nixed; Due to lack of interest from parents, Upper Grand won't offer extended child care**

Guelph Mercury - Fri Jul 9 2010

Page: A1 - Section: News

Byline: Greg Layson - Source: Mercury Staff

Due to lack of interest expressed by parents, the Upper Grand District School Board will not offer the extended day program at 13 schools where full day junior and senior kindergarten classes will take place.

"I'm not surprised," said Guelph Liberal MPP Liz Sandals, a former school board trustee. "Most of the preliminary data I was receiving sounded as if . . . it might not be offered."

The school board in February surveyed parents of new kindergarten students to see if they wished to enrol their children in the extended program, which offered before and after school child care for junior and senior kindergartners and students in Grade 1 and Grade 2.

The board in June then surveyed parents of all those groups and again found little interest.

"We suspect fees are an issue," the board's communications officer Maggie McFadzen said.

The board set fees of \$10 for morning care, \$17 for after school care or \$27 for both.

"They are more than what licensed child care operators charge," McFadzen said.

Although McFadzen admitted the fees were high, she was quick to note the board's fees were "neither the highest nor lowest in the province."

An enrolment of at least 20 children was required to support the two-staff model, which included one dedicated early childhood educator and an assistant planned for the programs.

But even by opening the program to children in Grades 1 and 2, providing they did not exceed 25 per cent of total enrolment, there was a lack of interest and the board determined the program would not run.

Sandals said several factors, including cost, demographics and pre-existing child-care arrangements for some families, could have played a part in the lack of interest.

Sandals said the program may one day be offered "where numbers warrant it."

Parents will be surveyed again in the new school year to assess future viability of extended day programs. The decision to cut the extended care will not affect the full day junior and senior kindergarten offerings.

Among the schools that will offer full-day kindergarten program are: Arthur, Brant Avenue, Drayton Heights, Erin, Gateway Drive, John Black, Laurelwoods, Minto-Clifford, Princess Margaret, Priory Park, Victoria Cross, and Willow Road.

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