

Lack of daycare spaces at 'crisis level,' say Liberals

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Joan Burke

Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones says there's a severe shortage of early childhood educators. Jones told the House of Assembly Wednesday that daycare centres have said the shortage " has reached a crisis level."

She then asked Child, Youth and Family Services Minister Joan Burke a number of questions on how the province plans to solve the shortage.

Burke said she recently met with the association which represents daycare owners.



Yvonne Jones

She said daycare workers can get a

\$6,000-a-year income subsidy from the province if they attain a certain level of certification.

" When I met with the operators, they certainly felt that it was a move in the right direction to be able to supplement the income of the early childhood educators," said Burke. "But they felt that the supplement should go to the childcare centres as opposed to the workers and that they would then pay the workers the supplement."

Burke said she is looking at that and a number of other recommendations the association raised at the meeting.

"If there is a better way to distribute the supplement, we are certainly interested in doing that," she told the House.

Jones then asked if Burke plans to raise the amount of the subsidy to qualified childcare workers.

Burke didn't answer the question directly, but said the College of the North Atlantic (CNA) now offers its certification program through distance education so people anywhere in the province can get the education they need to get the subsidy.

But Jones said daycare spaces in the province have been eliminated at licensed daycare centres because of the lack of qualified staff.

And she added that the waitlists for daycare spaces continue to grow.

The minister replied that the province has created hundreds of new childcare spaces in rural areas of the province where for-profit daycares wouldn't be able to make a go of it.

Jones also asked Education Minister Darin King why some students have been unable to transfer credits from private colleges to CNA when the province accredits both.

King said he was unaware that has happened, but added he would look into it.