



House of Assembly
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February 29, 2024

Eleanor Roulston, Warden
Box 230, Unit 170
15 Commerce Court
Elmsdale, Nova Scotia B2S 3K5

Re: East Hants Childcare Crisis letter dated February 29, 2024

Thank you for your letter, as you are aware I have been raising this issue with the Minister since I was elected in August 2021. The department has been looking at options under the current agreement, which was signed in June 2021.

I have had multiple discussions with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development (Minister Druhan) and her staff regarding the growth in our area and the lack of available spaces. At this point there is believed to be about 200-300 on waiting lists, of course with some families being on multiple lists, so I am not sure of the exact number.

Since 2021, EECD has requested the Federal Government, on numerous occasions, consider an amendment to the agreement, allowing for the expansion of private operators. Minister Druhan directed her officials to engage their federal counterparts on this issue as recently as September 2023. In November 2023, Minister Druhan, during her first meeting with the new federal Minister, Minister Sudds, expressed this need again. In February 2024, Minister Druhan submitted an official request to amend the joint agreement and include private operators, allowing for additional capacity to create much needed early learning and child care spaces across the province.

Last month, I was invited to Tots Academy when Minister Sudds was in the area. The private and non-profit organizations explained how in Nova Scotia 60% was private and a mainly female lead industry.

In the past, when the importance of private centres had been raised by the province, federal officials advised that there was no appetite for any private expansion. That being said, I, along with Minister Druhan, am hopeful that the most recent comments made by Minister Sudds, expressing an openness to working with our government on these issues, is a step in the right direction.

As you are aware EECD ensured that Swings Daycare was taken over by YWCA to ensure no loss of spaces when the operator at the time was looking



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to retire. If the department did not act quickly to deal with this, we would have had even more without daycare.

The Provincial and Federal Government have been supportive partners in this transformational work, and I am hopeful that our Governments request to continue this positive collaboration by amending the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, to include private operators, will create more spaces for many families in our community.

As always, if there is anything you need from me, please feel free to reach out via email or phone. Thanks for your letter on this important issue.

John A MacDonald
MLA Hants East

Cc: MP Kody Blois, Kings-Hants
Minister Becky Druhan, Minister of Education and Early Childhood
Development
Minister Jenna Sudds, Minister of Families, Children and Social
Development