

N.L. to initially receive \$7.5 million annually as part of new child care framework ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments have reached an agreement on a multilateral early learning and child care framework.

According to a news release from the provincial government, Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Dale Kirby was in Ottawa today for the signing ceremony on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The federal government will work with the province in the coming months to enter into a three-year bilateral agreement that will outline early learning and child care needs to be addressed in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The funding allocation for Newfoundland and Labrador over the first three-years of the agreement is just over \$7.5 million per year until 2019-20.

Specific program areas will be discussed during upcoming bilateral agreement negotiations.

The federal government has committed that the annual allocation will be no less than that of 2017-18 until 2027-28.

Funding under the framework is not cost-shared and will be paid to provinces and territories that sign bilateral agreements.

"Newfoundland and Labrador is very pleased to work with our federal partners on this significant initiative," Kirby said in the news release.

"This funding will allow us to enrich our early childhood programs and make affordable, quality early education and child care more accessible to families in our province"

Unifor disappointed with framework

Not everyone is happy with the new framework, however.

Unifor, Canada's largest private-sector union, quickly issued a news release following the announcement saying the agreement falls well short of the needs of Canadians.

"Children are missing out on early learning and development opportunities and society is missing out on the talents of workers - mostly women - who cannot afford to enter or re-enter the workforce," Unifor national president Jerry Dias said.

"This random hodgepodge of funding for child care spaces is more expensive than a universal system and it isn't good for children or parents."

The union says the continuation of a patchwork approach rather than building a universal system all but guarantees that needs will not be met.

Allowing provinces and territories to each provide their own action plans for the use of funds, with limited federal oversight, will likely result in significant differences in what is offered around the country, Dias added.

"We should all be as concerned about equitable, universal access to child care as we are about our health care. No matter where you live or what you earn, we all deserve access to regulated spaces with trained staff for our children," he said.

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