

Applause for early childhood educator pay hike ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The province's early childhood educators are getting a pay hike.

Dale Kirby, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development Dale Kirby announced Thursday that the provincial government will be topping up the Early Learning and Child Care supplement, an annual supplement paid to certified working early childhood educators.

The news follows the implementation earlier this week of the province's new Child Care Act.

"This announcement demonstrates our commitment to ensuring they are remunerated in a way that more closely reflects their training, their qualifications and what they contribute to our children's development," said Kirby.

The annual supplement to ECEs with Level 1 through Level 4 certification working full-time in child-care centres or in home-based care will go up between \$2,840 and \$5,340 a year.

Level 2 to Level 5 ECEs will receive an increase between \$2,500 and \$3,500 a year.

Kirby says this will amount to a bump of more than a dollar per hour for everyone, and more than two dollars an hour for those with the highest levels of certification.

Good for everyone

This is genuinely fantastic news, says Valerie Collins, co-ordinator of Family and Child Care Connections, which certifies and supports home-based child-care operations.

"Oh goodness," she said. "Definitely."

She says it's good even for home-based care providers who don't have ECE certification; the increase is significant enough to be an incentive for them to get the education and get certified.

"Any incentive to get people educated to get their early childhood education is a good thing," she said.

It's especially exciting for a select group of people in her office, which employs a team of home visitors, all certified ECEs, to visit family child-care providers to ensure their operations are meeting guidelines.

Previous to Kirby's announcement, they hadn't been eligible for the supplement at all. Now they are.

"I have some very happy staff here today," she said.

Home-based child care overlooked

The road leading up to these announcements - both of which Collins says will have sweeping, positive impact for child care in the province - has been rocky.

Though there are 125 approved family child-care providers in the province, which adds up to about 700 child-care spaces, home-based child care can sometimes be overlooked. The government didn't initially include Collins' organization in its consultations about the new Child Care Act.

"We weren't around the table when the discussions were had," she said. "We didn't have much of a say in it until they actually were released to us in July. So we didn't have a whole lot of information about it until very last minute."

No room for twins

The government originally proposed changes that would have allowed each home-based child-care provider to take just one infant under two years old into their care.

"We had major concerns about that," said Collins. "Just the fact of somebody having twins would now not be able to put their children in regulated family child care."

When Family and Child Care Connections caught wind of it, they put together a response outlining their concerns, and the provincial government made changes.

A seat at the table

Now licensed home-based caregivers can take four children under the age of three, with a maximum of four children in any home-based operation.

It's an experience that has left Collins with a bit more faith in the government and a bit more hope they'll consider family child-care providers in the future.

"It's good when you feel like you're listened to," Collins said. "That is certainly a positive thing. I feel like going forward that they will listen.

"I'm hoping that, anyway."

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