

Early Learning and Child Care ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Press release in html ^[2]

Press release:

In keeping with government's commitment to ensure quality, affordable and accessible child care, Health and Community Services Minister Tom Osborne today released government's new plan to enhance early learning and child care services in the province. The plan is funded through a bilateral agreement-in-principle signed by the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in May 2005.

"Government is committed to providing quality early learning and child care in our province and we are pleased to enhance the fundamental areas of early learning," said Minister Osborne. "Through this initiative, our government will make child care services more affordable for families, improve recruitment and retention of individuals working in the child care sector, create additional capacity in the system with a focus on rural areas, and enhance quality developmental opportunities and inclusion of children with special needs."

The recent change in the federal government has brought about a new approach to early learning and child care funding. This includes a commitment to provide the first two years of funding outlined in the Agreement in Principle to the province to support regulated child care initiatives, for a total investment of \$21.6 million.

Government has consulted with key stakeholders who have indicated that the key issues for this province include making child care more affordable for families; supporting training and other measures to attract more people to the field of child care; increasing the number of spaces in rural and underserved areas; supporting the inclusion of children with special needs; and, improving quality and developmental opportunities for children. The on-going plan is designed to support both one-time and sustainable initiatives in each of these areas.

Specifically, government will enhance early learning and child care through the following initiatives:

AFFORDABILITY

Beginning in June 2006, government will provide more support for lower and middle income families by increasing the eligibility threshold for a full child care subsidy from \$20,280 to \$25,000 (net income), benefiting up to an additional 250 families. For those earning higher than \$25,000, a sliding scale will be used to determine the amount a family will pay.

The daily rates of subsidy fees for spaces provided to child care service licensees on behalf of families will be increased from \$30.00 to \$35.00 for infants; \$21.25 to \$24.00 for preschool age children; and \$9.50 to \$11 for school age children.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

In an effort to stabilize the sector, effective immediately and retroactive to April 1, 2006, Government will:

- Implement changes to the current Educational Supplement Program by providing an income enhancement for child care providers earning less than \$25,000 annually, with a phase-out rate for eligibility up to approximately \$35,000, benefiting approximately 350 child care providers.
- Extend eligibility for the existing Educational Supplement Program to include family child care providers who have Level I or higher family child care certification, benefiting approximately 25 family child care providers.
- Provide entry-level providers, who are upgrading their educational qualifications, \$500 per year, benefiting approximately 50 child care providers.

In addition government will provide one-time funding of \$1.7 million to the College of the North Atlantic to enhance their Early Childhood Education Program and provide 50 students per year with training bursaries of \$5,000 from 2006 until 2009.

Government will develop a Recruitment and Retention Strategy through the Labour Market Development Agreement.

CAPACITY

Government will support access to regulated child care in all areas of the province through the establishment of licensed child care services in rural communities based on need, interest and capacity. This will result in a potential 16 new sites and 200 new child care spaces and will

build on existing programs such as family resource programs, schools and other community organizations. Initial work on this initiative will be undertaken this summer with potential for start up in late fall 2006.

QUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT

In recognition of the relationship between quality child care and improved developmental outcomes for children, government will provide professional development and training for child care providers and other stakeholders in areas such as quality enhancement and playground safety and inspection. This is expected to be implemented in fall 2006.

In addition, government will provide short-term support for cultural and linguistic needs, such as translation and culturally appropriate resources and program enhancements.

INCLUSION

In an effort to provide increased support for children with special needs, government will provide an additional \$100,000 per year to enhance staffing in child care services to support inclusion of children with special needs. In addition, government will provide support for a provincial conference on inclusion during 2006-07.

Related link: News article: Government's child-care plan receiving top grades ^[3]

Region: Newfoundland ^[4]

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