

New child-care spaces from federal funding announced ^[1]

Several new child-care centres opening

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The P.E.I. government has announced details on how it will create close to 200 new child-care spaces with federal funding announced last summer.

Ottawa announced \$10.5 million in funding for P.E.I. in August.

Ottawa boosts P.E.I.'s child care budget

On Friday morning, Early Learning Minister Jordan Brown laid out some of the details of where that money would go. It includes spaces in existing centres, and the opening of some entirely new ones.

- 16 new spaces in a new centre in Rollo Bay, Chateau des Etoile.
- 90 spaces in new centres in Charlottetown, Belfast and Long Creek.
- 9 spaces in Little Blessings in Stratford.
- 20 new infant spaces and 60 preschool spaces in existing centres around the province
- In total there will be 32 new infant spots.

In a news release, the province also said two autism specialists have been hired this year, as well as several autism tutors and special needs assistants.

More designated centres

As well, four more early learning centres have been designated as provincial Early Years Centres: Kidz Korner Early Learning Academy in Roseneath; Chateau des Etoiles in Rollo Bay; Superstars Daycare in Charlottetown; and Milestones Early Childhood Development Center in Stratford.

There are now 49 provincial Early Years Centres on P.E.I. The centres receive government funding but have to follow particular regulations, and offer services at a government rate. That could mean savings for parents.

Kidz Korner operator Josie Sheehan said the additional funding could allow her to increase her capacity.

"We hope to some day to build on so we can extend our license numbers," she said

"It allows us to expand a lot faster with the funding and stuff like that. Staying private you have to do a lot by yourself, so becoming government I get the extra help."

More is needed say advocates

The Early Childhood Development Association of PEI is applauding the new spaces, and that there is funding for education in the three-year plan. But executive director Sonya Hooper says something needs to be done about retention.

"What are we going to invest in keeping them? What's it going to take?" she asked in response to the announcement.

"What kinds of pension plans do we need to look or even just paid planning time, you know, there's lots of additional components that we need to look at to support the workforce to be successful and to retain these really great educators."

Brown said he understands those concerns.

Problem 'across the country'

"It's a problem frankly across the country and one that we're going to have to work to see what more we can do to try and, I'm not going to say fix, but improve upon," he said.

"We will look at ways that we will be able to, and probably with other departments like Work Force and Advanced Learning you know improve upon the situation that we have right now."

The new child-care spots are expected to be rolled out in the next few months.

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