

More child-care spaces opening on P.E.I. ^[1]

358 expected to be opened by October, with money from federal government

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EXCERPTS

Fifty new child-care spaces opened in Bloomfield, P.E.I., in September, bringing the number of new child-care spaces to 171 across the Island since April, the province says.

Another 187 spaces are expected to open by October in the east, west and central parts of the province, according to the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture. Another call for applications to open new centres will go out this fall.

"The 358 new spaces include many infant spaces, rural spaces, and extended hours that make life easier for parents who work seasonal or non-standard hours," said the department's minister, Jordan Brown, in a news release.

The PEI Action Plan for Children was launched in August 2017 and is supported by federal funding of \$10.5 million over three years.

Seasonal spaces and extended hours have been offered in Montague, Souris and Tryon. Full and part-time spaces have been added in Belfast, Montague and Bloomfield, with more spaces expected to open soon in other rural communities.

Regulation changes planned

Regulation changes are planned to increase the number of licensed family home centres in the province, and child-care subsidy funding has been increased to include more children who can benefit from early childhood programs.

Kati Melville, of Wee the West early childhood centre in Bloomfield, said the 50 spaces in her centre will make a difference for West Prince families.

"The location of our centre in Bloomfield Corner is much more convenient for families who were travelling longer distances, and the fact that we are open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. is much appreciated by parents who do seasonal work," she said. "The family is a key part of our play-based program and we are very focused on keeping parents informed of their child's development."

Throughout the province, there are 3,358 spaces and 143 licensed programs including 47 early years centres, 27 early childhood centres (non-designated), eight preschool centres, two family home centres and 59 school-age centres.

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