

More childcare spaces benefit P.E.I. children, families ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Early learning and child care are becoming more accessible to Island families with the opening of 358 new childcare spaces over the past six months.

Katie Melville of Wee the West said the 50 spaces in her new centre will make a real 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."

Education Minister Jordan Brown outlined the progress in several areas on Sept. 19 during a visit to Wee the West. Early learning and child care is the top priority for many families on P.E.I., Brown said.

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. 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.

In addition, there is an expansion of spaces in Charlottetown, Stratford and Cornwall where the population is increasing the most.

The P.E.I. Action Plan for Children aims to expand access to early learning and child care, and support children who can benefit the most from high quality early childhood experiences.

The plan was launched in August 2017 and is supported by federal funding of \$10.5 million over three years.

Quick facts:

Capital grants of \$300,000 have been made available to 21 centres to equip, renovate or expand their facilities to accommodate more children.

Operational grants of \$850,000 are helping 75 licensed centres strengthen inclusion and expand and enhance programming, which provides direct tangible benefits for children.

Funding of \$100,000 has enabled 120 early childhood educators to become certified or increase their certification, which in turn helps them earn higher wages and contribute to high quality care.

Approximately 171 new child care spaces opened since April 2018, including 32 new infant spaces. Another 187 spaces are expected to open by October 2018 in the east, west and central parts of the province. Another call for applications to open new centres will go out this fall.

Currently throughout the province there are 3,358 spaces and 143 licensed programs including 47 Early Years Centres, 27 early childhood centres (nondesignated), eight preschool centres, two family home centres, and 59 school-age centres.

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Region: Prince Edward Island ^[3]

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