

# Nova Scotia expands before-and-after-school care for pre-primary<sup>[1]</sup>

Zach Churchill says about 900 kids should get additional access

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online<sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

The Nova Scotia government is expanding access to before-and-after-school care and busing in an effort to make the pre-primary program more accessible.

Nova Scotia Education Minister Zach Churchill announced Tuesday that the coming school year would see 40 pre-primary locations offering the care programs in partnership with regulated child-care programs. Busing will also be available for children at 56 pre-primary sites.

Churchill told reporters in Bridgewater that parents have repeatedly asked for the additional options.

"We want to make sure that every four-year-old that is eligible has the opportunity to participate in our pre-primary program and early learning program," he said.

Churchill said the plan remains to have pre-primary available for all four-year-olds in the province in September 2020. The before-and-after care and busing options will also become provincewide, following the launch of a pilot program earlier this year.

The additional busing is focused on rural communities for this school year, purposely avoiding the Halifax area until the 2020 school year, said Churchill.

"We've had enough busing complications in Halifax and throwing four-year-olds into the mix would be problematic. Plus, the transportation access challenges are greatest in rural Nova Scotia."

The French language school board has been busing pre-primary students for about 12 years and the minister said that has worked well. He noted it is a voluntary program.

Churchill said the partnership with regulated child-care centres is purposeful, in part because of the providers' skills but also to address concerns some have expressed about lost business to the pre-primary program.

"We want them to succeed. We have a vested interest in their success."

'Open up a world'

Samantha Crouse-Eldridge, chair of the board for Small World Learning Centre, said they welcome the ability to partner with pre-primary because it can expose more children to what their programming offers.

"We're going to open up a world that maybe they haven't experienced before, and certainly that's going to help them to broaden their creativity and learn many different new things that are going to help them later on in life as they determine what they're going to be and who they're going to become."

The minister said about 900 kids should get additional access as a result of the expansion announced Tuesday.

Before-and-after care subsidies will be available to households making \$70,000 or less a year. Churchill said fees vary by provider and usually range between \$15 and \$22 per day. The subsidy can reduce that to as low as \$4 a day.

**Related link:**

**Region:** Nova Scotia<sup>[3]</sup>

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/19/08/nova-scotia-expands-and-after-school-care-pre-primary> [2]  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/before-and-after-school-care-expansion-pre-primary-1.5253202> [3]  
<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7853>