

B.C. reaches milestone in universal child care plan ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The Province has funded more than 10,400 new, affordable licensed child care spaces.

“Quality, affordable child care is making a real difference for B.C. families,” said Premier John Horgan on Tuesday. “In less than two years, we’ve funded more than 10,400 child care spaces, giving parents much-needed relief and the chance to rejoin the workforce. It’s all part of the largest investment in child care in B.C.’s history, including lower fees for child care spaces and our Affordable Child Care Benefit, which is saving families up to \$15,000 per year.”

B.C.’s diverse and professional child care providers are creating new spaces throughout B.C. for all age groups, from infant and toddler through to children aged 12. Many are expected to open within the next year or are already available.

“For too long, families have been struggling to find affordable, quality child care in their community, and I’m proud of the progress we’ve made,” said Katrine Conroy, Minister of Children and Family Development. “Not only are these new spaces saving parents time and money, they’re giving kids a quality learning environment where they can grow and learn about the world around them through exploration and play, helping B.C.’s future generations have success throughout their lives.”

Some child care providers will work with Indigenous partners to develop curriculums that teach children about Indigenous traditions, languages and history, and provide extra supports for children with special needs. Some providers also offer wraparound services for families, including bursaries and meal programs for vulnerable families, and counselling services and information sessions for parents to learn about topics such as child development, nutrition and mental health.

“As a mother, I know how hard it can be to find quality child care close to home,” said Katrina Chen, Minister of State for Child Care. “These new spaces will make a big difference for families who can have peace of mind knowing that when they drop their kids off at daycare, they’ll get the nurturing support they need to grow and thrive. We know there is still more to be done, and we are committed to finding new ways to partner with providers, non-profit organizations and governments to bring child care to more families.”

An additional 900 spaces have been funded through partnerships with UBCM and Aboriginal Head Start using federal funding. In addition, Budget update 2017 provided funding for 4,100 spaces. This means that in two years, 15,424 spaces have been funded in B.C.

“This work has been foundational to our minority government, and I am proud of our collective progress thus far,” said Sonia Furstenau, MLA for Cowichan Valley. “The first years of a child’s life are a phase of incredible neural development and every child deserves care that is nurturing, engaging, safe and fun. The BC Green caucus will continue to prioritize the creation of more public child care and early childhood centres, as well as strive to better support the dedicated educators caring for our youngest citizens.”

Since launching in February 2018, the Childcare BC plan has helped parents save more than \$320 million through the Affordable Child Care Benefit and Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative. Through these initiatives, more than 20,000 families have received child care for no more than \$10 a day since September 2018.

In addition, the Province has made significant investments to improve supports to B.C.’s early care and learning professionals. To date, more than 10,000 early childhood educators have received a \$1-per-hour wage enhancement, with another \$1-per-hour lift to come in April 2020. More than 600 new early childhood education seats will help more people pursue a career in child care, while funding for professional development is supporting existing educators to maintain and upgrade their skills, with bursaries enabling more than 4,500 students to pursue a career in child care.

Investing in child care and early childhood education is a shared priority between government and the BC Green Party caucus, and is part of the Confidence and Supply Agreement.

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