

Child-care and family subsidies to increase in Nunavik ^[1]

Healthy economic growth lets Quebec deliver on commitments earlier than promised.

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EXCERPTS

An optimistic economic update from Quebec has allowed for more money for families and child-care services across the province, including Nunavik.

Provincial economic growth was pegged at 2.4 per cent for 2018-19, which is 0.6 per cent more than what was forecast.

Thanks to this, the province's finance minister, Eric Girard, announced on Nov. 7 that \$857 million will go toward making good on commitments a few years earlier than expected. Two areas this will go toward are Quebec's already highly envied child-care subsidies and its family allowance.

"The Update on Québec's Economic and Financial Situation shows that Québec is doing very well," Girard said in a news release. "The robust economic growth in Québec allows us to reduce the debt burden and to step up the implementation of the government's commitments."

With this funding, the province is eliminating the additional contribution required of families for childcare that was put in place under Philippe Couillard's provincial Liberal government in 2016.

Under that program, an additional contribution for child care on top of the flat day rate was geared to income. That contribution went up to an additional \$15 per day for the highest earners. Families with an income of less than about \$50,000 saw no additional contribution.

The Nov. 7 announcement will return Quebec's daycare rate to a flat fee of \$8.25, eliminating the additional contribution for all income levels.

The new rate will apply to Nunavik, under the Kativik Regional Government's program Nunavik Childcare.

According to the province's news release, the new rate will apply this year, and the Montreal Gazette reported it would be retroactive to Jan. 1, 2019.

As of this week, the head of daycare services for the KRG, Julie-Ann Berthe, had not received information on how or when exactly the new rates would be rolled out in Nunavik.

Premier Francois Legault's government originally pitched a gradual elimination of the additional contribution that would see it fully removed by 2022.

The healthy economy and newfound surplus of \$4 billion for 2019-20 are effectively speeding up that process.

As well as removing the additional cost of childcare, the provincial government is moving ahead with increasing the family allowance that it had promised by 2021.

As of January 2020, the province says families will on average receive an additional \$779 per year.

This allowance is tied to income, with a minimum allowance of \$1,000 and maximum of \$2,515 per year. The new rules will treat all children the same, rather than the Liberals' scale of allowances whereby there was a larger allowance for the first child in a family.

"Today, we are completing the implementation of several measures that will benefit Quebecers," Girard said. "We are giving money back to Quebecers more quickly."

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