

N.W.T. government commits \$5M for child care for essential workers^[1]

Funding will create four temporary child care programs during pandemic

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AVAILABILITY

Access online^[2]

EXCERPTS

The Northwest Territories government is putting a total \$5.1 million toward child care support for healthcare workers, frontline staff and essential workers responding to COVID-19.

The funding will create four temporary child care programs during the pandemic to ease financial strain on family day homes and child care centres.

"While some parents are able to care for their children while working from home, challenging as that may be, there are others, such as doctors, nurses, grocery store workers, water truck drivers and so on who must still work outside the home in order to provide the essential services that we all rely on," R.J. Simpson, minister of education, culture and employment, said during a press conference announcing the funding.

"Supporting access to child care for parents who are providing essential services in response to COVID-19 is critical for us to be able to address this public health emergency."

One-third of child care costs covered

The government is spending \$1.9 million subsidizing one third of child-care costs for parents who have to go into work.

The funding will go to child-care providers who will then pass the savings onto parents. A government survey shows there are approximately 350 child care spaces needed.

It's spending \$1.3 million topping up wages by \$1,000 for each worker at licensed family day homes and centres for early learning and child care. The government expects roughly 200 workers to access the subsidy.

This is to make sure those programs have enough resources to offer their services outside of regular hours.

The government is spending \$665,000 for personal protective equipment for day care and day home staff and clients, and to pay for supplies and labour for cleaning those facilities.

In addition, the government is spending \$1.24 million on a subsidy for fixed costs, such as rent and utilities, for child care programs and centres closed due to COVID-19.

The territorial government says the subsidy will help programs reopen when the risks of COVID-19 have subsided.

Simpson believes at one point, 70 per cent of programs in the territory were closed. That number is now down to half.

"Hopefully more do open up again," he said.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has a place for employees of the territory's health authority to match their children with vacancies in open programs.

Child care is considered an essential service because it ensures workers can keep serving residents during the pandemic.

Chief Public Health Officer Kami Kandola recommended in a news release that early learning and child care programs stay open wherever possible.

Kandola also continues to recommend N.W.T. residents avoid all non-essential interactions, including play dates and gatherings.

She said day homes and child care are only open because they support the parents working in essential service positions.

Region: Northwest Territories^[3]

Tags: funding^[4]

Source URL (modified on 30 Apr 2020): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/04/nwt-government-commits-5m-child-care-essential-workers>

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