

# Letter: Furey's commitment to \$25-a-day child care is wise public policy <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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

## EXCERPTS

The 2017 Early Childhood Education Report identified Newfoundland and Labrador as the most improved province in the early-years sector. Policy changes that were initially controversial, such as full-day kindergarten, moved the province forward. Junior kindergarten for four year-olds and \$25-a-day child care are the next critical steps. They are supported by the research, consistent with the direction of other provinces and reflective of the core tenets of the federal/provincial funding agreements to increase access to early learning and child care for families with young children.

These recommendations operationalize the strategies contained in the 2017 report of the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes, which included an expansion of the current child care operating grants initiative to support quality programming, affordable fees for parents and fairer wages for educators. Together with junior kindergarten, these measures would ramp up access to early learning for all Newfoundland and Labrador's preschoolers. Rolling out the two initiatives in tandem avoids destabilizing the child care sector and ensures quality career opportunities for early childhood educators.

Quebec's experience expanding junior kindergarten and capping fees for younger children boosted its economy, returned mothers to the work force, raised post-secondary education for mothers and cut family poverty in half. Economists document how Quebec's universal child care program more than paid for itself through the taxes paid by working mothers and the reduced draw on social welfare programs.

Governments and economists across Canada and around the globe recognize that one of the best ways to stimulate economic growth, while reducing inequality, is to invest in the early years. Alberta just released a study on its three-year pilot of capping fees, which yielded exceptionally positive reviews. British Columbia is about to release a study on a similar program of capped child care fees, while the Northwest Territories tops up the wages of early child educators in centers that cap fees.

Understanding the plethora of research on the early years gives an appreciation for Premier Andrew Furey's commitment. Documents such as the Early Years Study 1-4 make this research easy to digest.

Among the many lessons learned during this pandemic is the fragility of the early years sector. Accessible and affordable early learning and care are vital to children, families and economies. Marginalized children and their families were especially impacted by closed schools and child centers, and many will struggle for years to regain lost time. Accessible child care can help close developmental gaps and reduce social inequality while directly impacting young families. Economic growth relies on people being able to work, which, in turn, depends on child care. This province desperately needs growth, more children, and greater options for young families. The premier's commitment recognizes both the urgency of our times and the evidence to respond effectively.

**Region:** Newfoundland <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** affordability <sup>[4]</sup>

funding <sup>[5]</sup>

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