

Extra \$385K meant to help more P.E.I. child-care centres meet higher bar ^[1]

Staff recruitment and retention are the highest priority, Brad Trivers says

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EXCERPTS

Prince Edward Island's education minister says that child-care centres will be eligible to apply for cash from a pool of \$385,000 to help them prepare to launch a pre-kindergarten program in the fall of 2021.

The free, half-day pre-kindergarten program for four-year-olds promised by the King government was supposed to begin in fall 2020, but that had to be delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Thursday, the province announced the funding to help up to eight centres meet the criteria for Early Years Centre designation – including following a curriculum set out by the province. The money will fund enhanced wages for centre staff, as well as help modify spaces and allow the hiring of an early childhood coach.

"The two key areas, of course, are spaces and then just having the qualified individuals to deliver the curriculum as teaching professionals," said Education Minister Brad Trivers.

Province wants all 4-year-olds in pre-K

Trivers said applications will be available as of Monday, and the province plans to disperse funding early in the new year.

He said the centres continue to recruit qualified staff, and he hopes there will be enough by the time the new pre-kindergarten program launches in the fall.

"This is all in preparation to make sure all Islanders have access to good-quality child care," Trivers said. "This means we'll have the spaces, and it'll give incentive to more early childhood educators to get trained, and we'll be able to successfully launch our universal pre-K in the fall."

Three-quarters of P.E.I. four-year-olds are already enrolled in some form of pre-kindergarten, he said.

"We're really targeting that last 25 per cent or so, to bring them in," Trivers said.

Region: Prince Edward Island ^[3]

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