

Subsidized daycare coming in April, says Yukon government^[1]

Kindergarten programs in rural communities also being expanded to full days

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EXCERPT

The Yukon government says subsidized child care is coming to the territory in April.

Education Minister Tracy-Anne McPhee says right now, the average daily cost for a child to be in daycare in Yukon is about \$43. That will drop to about \$11 per day with the government subsidy starting on April 1, she said.

"So it's not free universal child care, but it is subsidized universal child care and puts money in the hands of Yukon families," McPhee said on Thursday.

"I think this is really exciting news."

The Yukon government has long promised a plan for universal, affordable child care. Premier Sandy Silver made such an announcement last summer.

McPhee says the new model should be able to fund all licensed child care spaces in Yukon.

The territory also confirmed this week that kindergarten programs in the territory's rural schools will be expanded to full days starting this fall. Right now, rural kindergartners only attend half-days at school.

McPhee said the plans are based on research that shows how critical early childhood education and "high-quality play-based learning and learning experiences" can help determine a child's later success in school.

Learning from Quebec model

McPhee said her government looked to Quebec's model of heavily-subsidized daycare for ideas.

"They have been doing this for a while, and it's important that we saw and took a look at what they were doing," McPhee said.

"But of course, there's a Yukon version of that model."

Earlier this week, Yukon Party leader Currie Dixon criticized the government for taking too long to provide details of its plan. His party supports the concept of universal child care, but Dixon said the government seemed to be "late to the game."

"The premier announced in July that they would have a detailed plan in place in the fall, and here we are in February and they're just getting started on developing, let alone a detailed plan," Dixon said.

McPhee defended her government on Thursday, saying that it's a big job.

"We have been working diligently on this. The scope of the work is enormous, as you can imagine," McPhee said about the new initiatives.

"A critical part of this work is the engagement with our education partners and early childhood educators across the territory. And that work is ongoing."

Related link: Child care providers question plans for early kindergarten in rural Yukon schools

Region: Yukon Territory^[3]

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