

Living wage for child-care workers among top priorities, says NTI president ^[1]

New permanent funding for child care and early learning announced in federal budget

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EXCERPTS

Proper buildings, a living wage for workers and more training opportunities are the three biggest needs when it comes to child care and early childhood education in Nunavut, according to Aluki Kotierk, president of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

“We want parents to have access to programs that are rooted in Inuit knowledge, culture and language ... that’s crucially important,” she said to Nunatsiaq News, reacting to the federal government’s recent budget.

In that budget, the government announced new permanent funding for child care and early education across the country, which includes \$30 billion over the next five years.

“Many of the current employees across our territory don’t make a living wage ... when they play such a crucial role in making sure our young children are being taken care of and learning things in a healthy way,” said Kotierk.

In terms of training, she said education on how to support children with disabilities is an area in need of improvement, as well as more training for administrative staff “so they have the skills and feel supported to continue on with those really important jobs.”

Kotierk said money for infrastructure is important too, because many communities don’t have daycares at all, and others need renovations or to be expanded.

On top of the \$30 billion for child care, \$2.5 billion was allocated to Indigenous-led programs.

Some of that funding is allocated specifically to Inuit, but the budget does not say how much will go to Nunavut or Inuit programming.

Still, Kotierk said she is confident the territory will get the money it needs.

“I’m not worried about it because I know there’s been a significant amount earmarked,” she said.

But, she recently discussed next steps and the need for specifics with Dan Vandal, the minister of Northern Affairs, she said.

“With the budget currently, there’s no clarity,” said Kotierk.

“It will be important for us to determine what [the funding] means for Inuit ... what we can do and what other areas we need to continue to advocate for.”

Carolyn Bennett, minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, said it is an advantage for specific amounts not to be set in stone because it keeps the funding flexible.

“I think the beauty of this plan is it will be tailored to the reality of the region,” she said in an interview, adding that conversations about specifics will happen with the Government of Nunavut.

The minister met virtually with staff at Tundra Buddies Daycare Society on April 21 to discuss the new funding announced in the budget, and also said she heard concerns about unliveable wages.

Region: Nunavut ^[3]

Tags: federal budget ^[4]

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