

New child care legislation will build stronger B.C. for families^[1]

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EXCERPTS

New early learning and child care legislation, which became law Oct. 27, 2021, will help the Province deliver on its 10-year Childcare BC plan to build an affordable, quality and inclusive early learning and child care system for B.C. families.

The legislation comes into effect as more families than ever are benefiting from the fastest creation of child care spaces in B.C.'s history, with 26,700 new licensed spaces funded since the plan was launched in 2018. In addition, the government is providing \$10-a-day child care for twice as many families, saving parents up to \$1,600 a month through affordability measures, and giving early childhood educators a well-deserved raise.

"Today is a day to celebrate the most important policy shift for families that B.C. has seen in decades," said Katrina Chen, Minister of State for Child Care. "In just our first three years, we've made a life-changing difference for families by funding more than double the number of child spaces than the previous decade. Now, these acts will help us continue achieving our Childcare BC goals of giving all families access to quality, affordable and inclusive child care, so parents can secure a stronger future for their families, and kids can get the best possible start in life."

The Early Learning and Child Care Act, and the Early Childhood Educators Act are important steps in streamlining early learning and child care legislation to meet the diverse needs of B.C. families, early childhood educators (ECEs) and child care providers. The Early Learning and Child Care Act confirms government's ongoing commitment to making child care more affordable, and will expand the use of child care grants to improve inclusiveness of child care programs for more families throughout B.C. The Early Childhood Educators Act will improve oversight and help the Province recruit and retain ECEs.

"Parents raising young children know the value of high-quality child care for their children and for their ability to work, study or engage in other community activities," said Adrienne Montani, executive director, First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society. "These two acts will take us closer to our vision of a universal child care system parents can afford and trust."

The Early Learning and Child Care Act will increase transparency and accountability by requiring the Province to produce annual reports on its progress toward building an inclusive, universal child care system. The report will also include updates about how the Province is collaborating with Indigenous peoples to support a distinctions-based approach to child care for Indigenous children and families.

The new Early Childhood Educators Act will support quality early learning and child care by creating a public registry of ECEs and approved post-secondary programs, and improving oversight of ECEs. It will reduce barriers to certification by allowing internationally trained ECEs to work while getting certified, making it easier for child care providers to hire skilled educators.

"Legislation is a key building block of an effective child care system and is an important first step forward," said Emily Gawlick, executive director, Early Childhood Educators of BC. "This work must also respect Indigenous rights."

The acts are part of the foundation for an inclusive, universal child care system in B.C. and will be brought into force through regulations and adapted over time based on consultation and input from the child care sector, advocates, families, and First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners.

"For too long it's been child care chaos in B.C., but we are creating a cohesive early learning and child care system," said Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development. "This legislation is one of the first steps in our ongoing engagement with Indigenous partners and communities, as well as with partners in the child care and education sectors. We'll continue to work together to give kids the best start in life."

Quick Facts:

Since July 2018, the Province has funded more than 26,700 new licensed spaces.

The Childcare BC plan has helped tens of thousands of parents save up to \$1,600 a month, per child, through the Affordable Child Care Benefit and Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative.

Budget 2021 includes investments to double the wage enhancements for ECEs to \$4 an hour.

Budget 2021 investments will also convert about 400 licensed spaces into Aboriginal Head Start spaces that will provide Indigenous-led, culturally relevant and no-cost child care to Indigenous families throughout the province.

Budget 2021 includes investments enabling approximately 2,000 more families to access services from Supported Child Development and Aboriginal Supported Child Development programs.

Region: British Columbia [3]

Tags: legislation [4]

child care spaces [5]

families [6]

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Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/11/new-child-care-legislation-will-build-stronger-bc-families> [2]

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021CFD0070-002070#:~:text=New%20early%20learning%20and%20child,car%20system%20for%20B.C.%20families.> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/legislation> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-care-spaces> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/families>