

Improving child care in New Brunswick: Another step towards a universal system ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Moncton — The New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity is encouraged by the provincial government's declared intention to move forward on striking an agreement on universal child care with the federal government.

Following the federal election on September 20, plans to implement a national system of early learning and child care, which would reduce daily costs to \$10 per day by 2026, will go forward. New Brunswick has not yet reached an agreement with the federal government, nor have Ontario or Alberta.

Premier Blaine Higgs signalled his intention to reach a deal, but says that he has delayed the decision in order to better understand how the proposal "will benefit or support our private day cares."

"We welcome Premier Higgs stated intent in reaching a deal. While we are eager for the provincial government to reach an agreement on child care, we are concerned about the lack of support expressed by Premier Higgs for the expansion of child care in the non-profit sector," said Krysta Cowling, the Coalition Chair.

Other than reducing regulated child care fees, the plan aims to increase quality spaces particularly in the non-for-profit sector. In New Brunswick, over two-thirds of early learning and child care centers are for-profit and only a third are non-profit. Additionally, New Brunswick is the lone province with no publicly-funded child care.

"Given that non-profit child care is primarily accountable to children and families, it is critical to ensuring quality, accessible, inclusive, and affordable child care. Expanding into the non-profit sector ensures that profits are reinvested back into the services themselves—and the early childhood educators," explained Cowling.

A total of 1,520 early childhood educators left their positions in 2019-2020, accounting for 27.8 percent of the workforce. At an average wage of \$18.75 per hour for those with training, they are still far from achieving pay equity.

"This is a golden opportunity to negotiate a system that will ensure fair wages for our educators, quality services for our children, and encourage the full participation of our citizens in the workforce. We call on Premier Higgs to reach an agreement without further delay and gives equal consideration and allotment to non-profit child care," argued Cowling.

Rachel Richard is the communications director for the New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity is a group of individuals and organizations that pursues and ensures the realization of the right to pay equity and to just conditions of work for women. To that end, the Coalition engages in communication, education, research, advocacy for the adoption and the implementation of adequate legislation, as well as public policy dialogue and development.

Pay equity is equal pay for work of equal value. To achieve pay equity, the value of female-dominated jobs must be compared to the value of male-dominated jobs.

Related link: Building a Canada-wide early learning and child care system ^[3]

Region: New Brunswick ^[4]

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