

Ottawa, N.W.T. announce \$10-a-day child-care deal ^[1]

Agreement worth \$51.1M over 5 years will create 300 new child-care spaces by 2026

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EXCERPTS

The N.W.T. has signed on to the federal government's child-care deal.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the deal Wednesday in Ottawa alongside Premier Caroline Cochrane and MP Michael McLeod.

Trudeau said the deal will cut the cost of child care for children under six years old in half in the Northwest Territories and that, within five years, the average cost of child care will be \$10 a day.

The median monthly cost of child care in Yellowknife in 2020 was \$990 a month per child.

"Families in Yellowknife will save up to \$9,500 a year with this agreement," said Trudeau.

The deal includes federal funding of over \$51 million over the next five years.

Trudeau also said the deal will create 300 new child care spaces in the territory by the end of March 2026.

Those spaces will be provided exclusively by not-for-profit providers, including community and non-profit organizations as well as family day home providers.

'The turning point'

Cochrane, a former social worker, said the deal will help transform the early learning and child-care system in the territory.

"This agreement actually allows us to pay people properly, it allows us to get the education so that people aren't just babysitting our children, they're actually looking at the development aspects that they need to develop for children to thrive," she said.

She added there are long waiting lists in some communities, but the agreement changes that.

"This is the turning point and I am looking forward to, at the end of next year and at the end of five years, to see what will come," said Cochrane.

She also said that in some instances, the agreement will provide access to day care for the first time in some N.W.T. communities.

Early childhood educators

Trudeau said a wage grid and certification process will be created to help attract and retain early childhood educators.

Northwest Territories Minister of Education, Culture and Employment R. J. Simpson, who attended the news conference virtually, said the qualifications required to be an early childhood educator also allow them to become junior kindergarten teachers, which pays more.

He said the funding agreement will allow the territory to shrink that wage gap.

"It won't happen all at once, but over the years we're going to see that gap shrink and wages will be competitive," he said.

Some of the funding, he said, will go toward early childhood education training programs that people can access remotely.

"We're going to make sure that people in every community have access to that type of training," said Simpson.

Culturally responsive

Cochrane said the agreement also supports culturally relevant programming across the territory.

Simpson added the agreement allows the territory to address availability, affordability, inclusivity and quality in a way that is suited to the N.W.T., which is diverse and has 11 official languages.

"Our early learning and child-care system must be culturally responsive and reflect the Indigenous world views and cultures, languages of each of our 33 communities."

He said the agreement allows the territorial government to work with Indigenous organizations to develop culturally appropriate systems. With the signing of this agreement with the N.W.T. there are only two jurisdictions that haven't signed on with similar deals, Ontario and Nunavut.

Trudeau said he has had positive conversations with the Nunavut government and expects to announce a deal with the territory early in the new year.

Region: Northwest Territories ^[3]

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