

Nunavut childcare spots to cost an average of \$10 a day by March 2024 ^[1]

Deal will create 238 new licensed early learning and child care spaces by the end of March 2026

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EXCERPTS

Nunavut is the latest territory to sign on to the Canadian government's childcare deal.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, alongside Nunavut Premier P.J. Akeegok, promised to reduce fees for licensed child care facilities by about half by the end of the calendar year. The deal applies to families with children up to six years old.

In his announcement Monday, Trudeau called the deal "a game changer."

He said the change is expected to cut costs for some Iqaluit families by an estimated \$14,000 per year and that the agreement will support an average of \$10 a day child care by March 2024, two years ahead of the federal target.

The deal also commits \$66 million over five years to create 238 new licensed early learning and child care spaces by the end of March 2026.

Asked how the deal would help Nunavummiut relying on home-based non-licensed day cares, Karina Gould, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development of Canada, said the government recognizes the need "to grow the number of spaces," pointing to the commitment to create 238 new spaces.

"Although we recognize that there are also specific infrastructure challenges in Nunavut," Gould said.

"One of the next steps and further areas of work between the Government of Canada and and Government of Nunavut is to identify where those growth opportunities are."

New wage grid for workers

In order to hire workers to fill those new spaces, Nunavut Minister of Education Pamela Gross said that government is developing a wage grid for workers already in the field, as well as for new hires. The goal is to offer wages that reflect training and years of experience and improve recruitment.

She said there will also be incentives for certification.

Asked further how non-licensed facilities could access the funding, Gross said "to anyone who wants to establish a day home we will work directly with those spaces."

The deal also declares a commitment to Inuit-specific Indigenous early learning and childcare services. Funding for those services are being implemented in partnership with Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. and other Nunavut regional Inuit associations.

Childcare has long been an issue in Nunavut, with years-long wait lists for day care spaces in Iqaluit and a shortage of day care spaces and trained staff in many smaller communities.

Day care was a major topic of concern during last fall's territorial election when several candidates, including now-Premier Akeegok, cited affordable childcare as a top priority.

Nunavut has also seen innovation in childcare, such as the Pirurvik early childhood education program that started in Pond Inlet, and which is rooted in traditional child-rearing practices.

An Inuktitut-language daycare in Iqaluit has seen heavy demand, despite staffing challenges, and a northern-owned publishing company has recently produced books and toys tailored to Inuit-language speaking Nunavut children.

The partnership between the federal and territorial government leaves only Ontario as the final Canadian jurisdiction yet to announce a childcare agreement.

Region: Nunavut ^[3]

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