

Unclear how new childcare plan will impact planned Guysborough centre ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

GUYSBOROUGH – To help defray rising costs, the Nova Scotia government has topped up its fund for the province’s 330 licensed childcare centres, including those it said, “were previously unfunded or partially funded,” by \$1 million.

But the announcement last week – which provides anywhere from \$500 to \$16,000 in additional funding per daycare – does not clarify whether the new funding options are directly available to the Guysborough & Area Childcare Association (GACA), or other unlicensed childcare facilities that are still in the design phase.

When asked for further details, a provincial government source said they couldn’t speak to “those exact specifics” but would follow up on the local situation.

Another provincial government source said the government called for expressions of interest in November for current no-for-profit operators who would like to expand their footprint, garnering a positive response. “So, you will be hearing more about that in the coming days and weeks,” the source said. “That is a really positive sign.”

Commenting on the announcement, GACA President Katie Pellerin told the Journal in an email: “We are still moving forward at full speed in hopes to open our child care centre in late summer 2022.”

In July, the provincial government announced a \$500,000 contribution towards the construction of new daycare under the auspices of the newly formed GACA. The new centre, to be located at Chedabucto Place – where renovations were scheduled to begin – was to provide spaces for approximately 20 infants and toddlers as a fully-licensed childcare operation.

Due to a change of provincial government policy, however, the daycare has since been advised to partner with an established, licensed facility. Discussions with one operator are reportedly underway. “While we will not be issued a child care license of our own, we are working closely with the Department of Education as they help to facilitate a potential partnership with an already established non-profit child care provider in our area,” Pellerin said.

The announcement comes in the wake of a five-year, \$605-funding agreement between the provincial and federal governments to reduce childcare fees in Nova Scotia by 25 per cent this year, and drop them to an average of \$10 a day by 2026. In her press conference, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development Becky Druhan said the new provincial measure is designed to offset the 25 per cent fee reductions for parents and provide stable funding.

“We’re providing a one-time grant to reduce pressures facing childcare operators during this transition period,” she said. “We’re also requiring operators to utilize existing spaces operationally. We recognize and value the important role that early childhood educators, non-profits, and for-profit operators play in caring for our children. And we want them all to succeed as we move forward with this historic childcare agreement with the federal government. Together, we will build a childcare system that cares for everyone.”

She added: “We’ll be engaging with the sector to make sure that those who are participating at the table still have a way to share their voice and their perspective.”

Said Pellerin: “Our board of directors is interested in staying actively involved throughout this process and partnership moving forward to represent the values of the families in our area.”

Region: Nova Scotia ^[3]

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