

Child care gets major funding injection^[1]

Ahmed Hussen, the federal minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and Education Minister Jeanie McLean and watch Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland on the screen during Friday's announcement on child care funding in Whitehorse.

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EXCERPTS

The Yukon and federal governments are forming a partnership that will be child's play.

Ottawa announced Friday it will provide \$42.6 million to the territory over five years to help pump up its newly-minted universal child care and early childhood education programs.

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life, and all parents should have the ability to build both a family and career," reads a news release that accompanied the announcement.

"Yet, too many families across Canada lack access to affordable, inclusive, and high-quality child care.

"The global COVID-19 pandemic has also made it clear that without access to child care, too many parents – especially women – cannot fully participate in the workforce.

"The agreement will significantly improve early learning and child care for children in Yukon. Through the agreement, the governments of Canada and Yukon will work together to rapidly expand access to quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care programs and services."

With the signing of the agreement, "the money will soon begin to flow," said Education Minister Jeanie McLean.

Friday's announcement included the creation of 110 new regulated early learning and child care spaces within five years to help ensure families of children under six years old can access child care spaces that meet their needs, said McLean and Premier Sandy Silver.

"The Government of Canada's investment will help ensure that all families have access to an average of \$10 a day out-of-pocket parent fees for full-time regulated child care spaces for children under age six," Yukon officials said.

"This agreement also supports the ongoing implementation of Yukon's wage grid, which provides a minimum wage of nearly \$30 an hour to fully qualified early childhood educators— the highest minimum wage for early childhood educators in the country," according to the press release.

Federal funding will be exclusively used to support the creation of regulated spaces in not-for-profit and public early learning and child care providers, as well as family-based providers.

"The agreement will also support an early learning and child care system that is fully inclusive of children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports, and ensures all families have equitable access to high quality, affordable early learning and child care," officials stated.

"The agreement also supports a clear commitment to continue to work collaboratively with Yukon First Nations to ensure Indigenous children will have access to affordable, high-quality and culturally appropriate early learning and child care," officials stated.

"Strong educational supports for children of all ages and needs are vital for the success and prosperity of all Yukoners," Silver said.

"This year, we introduced the Yukon's first universal affordable child care program to provide Yukon children with access to affordable, high-quality childcare and learning opportunities.

"We are pleased to work with the Government of Canada to enhance this program and make life more affordable for Yukon families," the premier added.

"Not only is this an investment that benefits our children's development, it is an investment that benefits our local economy and equality in the workforce."

On April 1, the Yukon government introduced its universal child care system, part of a \$25 million annual investment in its early learning

and child care system.

“Ensuring all Canadians have access to high-quality and affordable early learning and child care is feminist economic policy and smart economic policy,” added Chrystia Freeland, the deputy prime minister and minister of Finance who made the announcement over Zoom.

“It is critical social infrastructure, over 50 years in the making, which will drive jobs and growth,” Freeland added.

“By working with the Government of Yukon on implementing the beginning of this historic investment, we will be giving every child in the territory the best possible start in life, increasing women’s participation in the workforce, creating jobs, and making life more affordable for young families across Yukon.”

McLean said: “This historic agreement between the governments of Yukon and Canada will allow us to expand our new universal affordable child care program and enhance child care delivery in the Yukon.”

The two governments will create an implementation committee that will monitor progress on early learning and child care commitments in consultation with partners and stakeholders.

Ottawa will be represented on the committee by the Federal Secretariat on Early Learning and Child Care.

“Through previous investments in early learning and child care, the Government of Canada helped to create over 40,000 more affordable child care spaces across the country prior to the pandemic, including over 1,500 in Yukon,” the news release states.

“Child care is not a luxury; it’s a necessity,” said Ahmed Hussen, the federal minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

“Our vision for early learning and child care is big and ambitious, but our government knows that it’s the right thing to do to ensure every child has the best start in life.”

“Through this historic agreement, our government is working to ensure that all children in Yukon have access to the quality child care they need to succeed,” said McLean.

“Together with our partners, we are supporting early learning programs for Yukon families that incorporate on-the-land and experiential learning, local First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being, traditional language learning, and more.”

Region: Yukon Territory ^[3]

Tags: Canada-wide agreement ^[4]
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