

Governments of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador provide update on pre-kindergarten and the early learning and child care action plan ^[1]

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Today the Governments of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador provided an update on actions underway as part of the \$347 million in federal investments for early learning and child care in Newfoundland and Labrador. These investments were made through the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Early Learning and Child Care Agreements announced in summer 2021.

A Pre-Kindergarten pilot program will launch by September of this year that will create additional regulated child care spaces. At full implementation, the province-wide Pre-Kindergarten program will create approximately 3,100 regulated spaces for four-year olds by 2025-26, which will open up existing child care spaces for younger children.

The Provincial Government put out a call today to those interested in working in the pilot program to email PreK@gov.nl.ca ^[3] to join the contact list for the application process. Early childhood educators (ECEs) looking to work in Pre-Kindergarten will be required to hold a Child Care Services Certification (CCS) Level III or higher.

Hiring preference for the pilot will be given to ECEs, as well as former ECEs who return to the sector. In recognition of current staffing levels in the sector, in the event that there are not enough ECEs with Level III certification to fill the pilot, applications will also be considered from recently retired primary and elementary educators with primary experience. To ensure that Pre-Kindergarten will be a play-based program with consistent programming in all locations throughout the province, any staff hired to take part will be required to complete training developed in consultation with the Association of Early Childhood Educators specific to work the Pre-Kindergarten setting.

An update was also provided on actions underway to encourage the creation of regulated child care spaces by not-for-profit groups, municipalities and family home-based regulated services, to increase wages for early childhood educators and to grow the ECE workforce. These include:

Expanding existing funding under the Family Child Care Capacity Grant from the current limit of \$7,500 to up to \$15,000 with an escalating service commitment;

Increasing funding under the existing Child Care Capacity Grant from \$5,000 to \$7,000 per created space for not-for-profit groups and municipalities;

Providing additional funding to Family and Child Care Connections to increase the number of home-based operations in the Avalon and Western regions and to expand their family child care agency into Labrador and Central Newfoundland;

Work is ongoing to introduce a wage grid for ECEs by January 1, 2023, with changes to the Operating Grant Program to incorporate the current income supplement as part of the wages paid to ECEs;

With these changes it is expected that many ECEs will receive a wage increase that reflects their important work and which will help with recruitment and retention. For example, Level II ECEs are expected to receive a combined wage in the \$25-26 per hour range;

Adding approximately 700 additional seats in post-secondary early learning and child care programs at College of the North Atlantic, Keyin College and Academy Canada;

Working with College of the North Atlantic to introduce a new “earn while you learn” program that will allow early learning and childcare students to split their time between the classroom and working part-time in regulated child care; and

Establishing an Early Learning and Child Care Minister’s Advisory Committee with representation from established sector groups.

As a result of these measures, by 2025-26 the province aims to add approximately 5,800 additional regulated child care spots and to increase the percentage of fully certified ECEs working in the sector to at least 60 per cent.

Since January 1, 2022, the cost of regulated child care has moved to \$15 per day as a result of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. More than 90 per cent of regulated child care spaces in the province are subject to this rate through participation in the Operating Grant Program. With plans to reduce parent fees to \$10 per day in 2023, two years ahead of the Canada-wide target, Newfoundland and Labrador remains at the forefront of affordable child care in Canada.

The Government of Canada is making a transformative investment to build a Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care system in partnership with provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners. This includes \$306 million for the 2021-2022 to 2025-2026 Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, a one-time investment of nearly \$6.5 million in 2021-2022 to support the early childhood workforce, as well as over \$34 million for the 2021-2022 to 2024-2025 Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador ELCC Extension Agreement.

Quotes

"Quality, affordable child care in Newfoundland and Labrador is important for families, the economy, and the future. Our government led the way with \$25 a day child care and I am pleased to be moving forward with this announcement. Today, we set the stage for significant growth every year from now to 2025-26, addressing both short and long-term child care needs for families in this province and improving compensation for early childhood educators."

Honourable Andrew Furey

Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador

"The Government of Canada's goal is to ensure that by the end of March 2026, all families in Canada, no matter where they live, will have access to regulated early learning and child care for an average of \$10-a-day. From reduced child care fees to improvements to child care centres and higher quality programming, we are making significant progress towards the implementation of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care system in Newfoundland and Labrador."

Honourable Karina Gould

Canada's Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Government of Canada

"With significant progress already made on child care affordability, our focus now under the Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan is on increasing access to quality, regulated child care and increasing the workforce in the sector. Increased grant funding to home-based operations will support space creation for all ages, while the Pre-Kindergarten program will expand availability for four-year olds and will open up spaces for other ages at full implementation."

Honourable Tom Osborne

Minister of Education

Region: Newfoundland ^[4]

Tags: \$10 a day ^[5]

national child care system ^[6]

child care workforce ^[7]

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