

Parent fees reduced in Northwest Territories: Space expansion the next hurdle ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The governments of Canada and Northwest Territories (NWT) recently announced that fees for regulated child care programs for children under 6 years of age will be reduced by an average of 50 per cent. This reduction is retroactive to January 1, 2022, twelve months ahead of the fee reduction schedule set out in the Canada-NWT early learning and child care (ELCC) agreement signed last December.

This is welcome news for families whose fees often surpassed \$1000 per month.

While welcoming the development, some members of the Northwest Territories legislative assembly (MLA) say the lower fees make the need for more regulated child care that much more urgent.

"This agreement is only as good as the space available for the programming and we still have many communities without quality child care," said Frame Lake MLA Kevin O'Reilly.

The Canada-NWT ELCC agreement provides federal funding for the establishment of 300 additional regulated spaces over the next five years.

"We are prioritizing small communities that don't have child care and we're going to work with the Indigenous governments and NGOs who might be interested in operating child care facilities," said Northwest Territories Education Minister RJ Simpson.

The NWT government recognizes its expansion plan will not be achieved without raising the compensation paid to early childhood educators (ECEs) and has committed to introducing a new provincial wage grid. NWT, like all jurisdictions in Canada, is suffering a child care workforce crisis because it cannot recruit or retain qualified ECEs to work in the very low-paid sector, and because the working conditions are poor relative to other economic sectors.

Child Care Now applauds the government of Northwest Territories for its commitment to building a universal child care system that will make quality child care programs available and affordable to all families in every community. We are encouraged that the government is working closely with Indigenous governments in its decisions, and we encourage continued consultation with those who work in early learning and child care, especially frontline ECEs. Also, the further development and implementation of NWT's child care plans must continue to engage those who live in communities to ensure their diverse needs are met in each case.

Also, Child Care Now urges the NWT government to fund programs sufficiently to cover the cost of low parent fees as well as the costs of proper staff compensation, including pensions and benefits.

Region: Northwest Territories ^[3]

Tags: \$10 a day ^[4]

national child care system ^[5]

child care expansion ^[6]

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