

Daycare fees in N.B. to be cut in half by June ^[1]

Daily rate for infants in urban daycares going from \$41.30 to \$21

Author: Cox, Aidan

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EXCERPTS

Parents in New Brunswick can expect a big drop in the fees they pay to send their children to daycare this spring.

As of June 1, out-of-pocket daycare costs will be cut in half, announced Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Dominic Cardy during a news conference on Monday afternoon.

"We know that supporting early childhood education is critical to supporting the long-term success and achievement of all of our learners," said Cardy, speaking at Au P'tit Monde De Franco, a francophone daycare that shares the same building at École Sainte-Anne in Fredericton.

"So we're working to build a world-class education system, not just [kindergarten] to [Grade] 12 but including in the early childhood education system, and that means those students need care, they need support, so they can flourish through those years which we know are critical to their development as young citizens."

The reduced child-care costs are part of a \$544-million provincial-federal agreement, struck in December and aimed at lowering the cost of daycare to \$10 a day by 2026.

Families will be charged under a standardized low-fee model, with rates varying depending on the age of the child and whether they attend daycare in a large urban area or rural area.

Daycare fee reductions will include:

- From \$37.50 to \$19 per day for infants in small urban and rural areas.
- From \$41.30 to \$21 per day for infants in large urban areas.
- From between \$32.60 and \$31.30 to \$16 per day for preschool-age children in small urban and rural areas.
- From between \$36.70 and \$35 to \$18 per day for preschool-age children in urban areas.

For low and middle-income families who qualify for the Parent Subsidy program, the daily daycare costs will go down even more, to an average of \$14 per day.

The province already announced last month that as part of the federal-provincial agreement, the salaries of early childhood educators in designated centres and homes would go up as of April.

The salaries for trained educators went up from \$19 an hour to \$23.47 an hour, and salaries for untrained educators rose from \$14.90 to \$16.90.

Federal Families, Children and Social Development Minister Karina Gould was also at the new conference on Monday and said the announcement means some families will be able to save up to \$3,900 annually in daycare costs per child.

"That will make a real difference for parents who have faced the stress and financial worry of unaffordable child-care spaces," she said.

Following the announcement, Cardy responded to questions from media, including whether there was a similar fee reduction planned for parents whose children attend after-school daycares.

Cardy said those centres weren't covered under the federal-provincial agreement, but added that the wages for their employees were bumped up this month by the province to align them with those received by employees working at daycares covered by the agreement.

Recruitment biggest issue, daycare board president says

Nicolas Carrier is president of the board for Au P'tit Monde De Franco, a not-for-profit daycare with about 100 children.

He said the announcement is great for the parents of children at the daycare, as well as for himself as a parent.

"I still can't fathom the impact this is going to have for me as a parent on my finances and the ability I'll have to save for more things for my family, and I'm sure for most of our families here that send kids to the daycare," he said.

At the same time, Carrier said recruiting early childhood workers remains a challenge, though he's confident it will start to get easier with the raises announced last month.

"The minister talked about going overseas to recruit foreign nationals but you can only do that once you can offer a proper salary.

"If we're going to attract people from overseas to come and work here, we have a responsibility to integrate them to society and make sure their needs are taken care of, and the way to do this is to offer a job that's decently paid — something we couldn't really do until the announcement of the Canada-New Brunswick agreement."

Region: New Brunswick ^[3]

Tags: child care fees ^[4]

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