

Province Creates Team to Advise on Child Care Transformation

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EXCERPTS

Twenty-one people from across Nova Scotia have been selected to join the Province's Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Table.

The table will provide direct input and guidance on next steps in the Province's five-year plan to transform child care through the Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. Members will meet for the first time in June.

"We received a tremendous response from operators, early childhood educators, parents, training institutions and other stakeholders, and I was truly impressed by the applicants," said Becky Druhan, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. "We can't move on this important work without hearing directly from those who are affected. The table will provide this important link and help steer us as we build a system of child care that cares for everyone."

Nova Scotians will also have additional opportunities to provide input on the child-care transformation, through initiatives including working groups, focus groups and surveys.

Nova Scotia is currently in the first year of implementing the five-year \$605 million agreement.

About 250 applications were reviewed based on criteria including geographic representation, knowledge of and experience with the child-care system, and representation from traditionally under-represented groups.

As the agreement is implemented, the Department is also making operational changes based on operator feedback. Operators again have the flexibility to apply for changes under their total licensed capacity following a hold issued late last year to allow for system planning. For example, a centre can apply to reallocate spaces for other locations or age ranges, based on needs, and can apply to sell a business and licence under existing terms and conditions.

The Department also plans to launch a voluntary pilot project to support operators who want to transition their business model from private to not-for-profit.

As announced in January, through the agreement, families in Nova Scotia saw a 25 per cent reduction, on average, in child-care fees as of April 1, retroactive to January 1, 2022, for children in regulated child-care spaces. This reduction means a savings, on average, of \$200 per month for parents with a toddler in child care. This is an initial step in reducing 2019 child-care fees for Nova Scotian families by 50 per cent, on average, by the end of 2022, and in achieving an average of \$10-a-day care by March 31, 2026.

Quotes:

Every child deserves the best start in life. The work of Nova Scotia's new Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Table will help strengthen early learning and child care and ensure the system works for all families no matter where they live. We will continue to work with Nova Scotia to help ensure that children have access to the high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and child care they need to succeed.

- Karina Gould, federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

I am excited and eager to have my voice at the table for this long-awaited transformation in early learning and child care in Nova Scotia. I am also excited for children and families, but especially for each and every early childhood educator in Nova Scotia who puts everything into what they do. They have

prevailed and will finally have the compensation and recognition they undeniably deserve. It means a lot to me personally and professionally that I can be a voice for all.

- Kimberly Cormier, Engagement Table member and child care operator, Antigonish

I am honoured to be a member at this table. This is an exciting time for early learning and child care in Nova Scotia. But, as we know, whenever there is significant change to the status quo it is accompanied by questions and some uncertainty. It is excellent that stakeholders will have a place to bring their questions and provide their input. Although we represent various perspectives, we have a common goal of creating a quality, affordable, accessible and responsive system of early learning and child care. What an incredible opportunity for both the early childhood community and for young children and their families throughout Nova Scotia.

- Christine McLean, Engagement Table member, Mount Saint Vincent University Associate Professor, Child & Youth Study, Halifax

Quick Facts:

- a call for applications to the Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Table was issued in March 2022 and the deadline to apply was April 8, 2022
- work continues on Nova Scotia's Excellence in Early Childhood Education workforce strategy, which will result in higher wages and benefits for early childhood educators by this fall
- virtually all child-care centres are funded through an annual funding agreement, meaning the majority of parents that access licensed child care qualify for the current 25 per cent fee reduction and future reductions
- 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 a historic federal investment of almost \$605 million for Nova Scotia from 2021-22 to 2025-26, in addition to \$58 million over the same four years for the Canada-Nova Scotia Early Learning and Child Care Extension Agreement and a one-time investment of about \$10.9 million in 2021-22 to support Nova Scotia's early childhood workforce
- Nova Scotia invests \$132.6 million in early learning and child care annually, including \$54 million for pre-primary and over \$75 million for the child-care sector

Region: Nova Scotia ^[3]

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