

# B.C. expands access to in-school child-care program <sup>[1]</sup>

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Excerpts:

With licensed practical nurse Tracy Maplesden-McClymont and her wife both working at a clinic in B.C.'s South Okanagan, access to quality child care is a necessity.

Two years ago, they discovered a program offering affordable before- and after-school child care on campus.

It was a lifesaver.

"One of us would have to quit work if we didn't have this. It would mean one less nurse in our clinic," Maplesden-McClymont said.

Their first son, Jacob, who is now in first grade, was one of the beneficiaries of the Seamless Day Kindergarten pilot at Oliver Elementary, the school chosen as one of four sites for the program launched by the B.C. government in 2019.

Program minimizes transitions for kids

Dubbed "seamless," the program integrates before- and after-school care into the kindergarten classroom delivered by certified early childhood educators who work alongside the classroom teacher.

In 2021, B.C.'s Ministry of Education and Child Care expanded the program to an additional 21 schools across the province. This year, it is allocating \$3 million to include 20 more schools in the program.

Education and Child Care Minister Rachna Singh announced the expansion Monday at Oliver Elementary, highlighting the program's success in providing busy parents with peace of mind, knowing that their children are learning and playing in a safe environment throughout the day.

"It minimizes transitions [and] provides continuity for our youngest learners," Singh said.

Maplesden-McClymont, who is originally from Scotland, and her wife, who is from Texas, do not have family in the Okanagan to help with child care while they work.

Without the Seamless Day Kindergarten program, they say finding alternative child-care arrangements for Jacob, who is autistic, would be challenging.

Under the program, they can drop off Jacob at the kindergarten as early as 7:15 in the morning. and pick him up as late as 5:30 in the afternoon — an extended period of time at school that Maplesden-McClymont says has allowed Jacob to develop stronger relationships with his teachers, early childhood educators, and fellow students.

"Building those social connections is really important," she said.

Maplesden-McClymont says she pays \$350 per month for Jacob's in-school child care.

In an emailed statement to CBC News, the Ministry of Education and Child Care says the amount charged under the program varies by school district.

The province has committed to spending \$4.1 million in 2023-2024 to support the program and says school districts can apply for provincial funding to help reduce child-care charges.

Maplesden-McClymont says their younger sons, Kindy and Kaelan, will be starting kindergarten under the program at Oliver Elementary in September.

**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[3]</sup>  
**Tags:** accessibility <sup>[4]</sup>  
female labour force participation <sup>[5]</sup>  
before and after school <sup>[6]</sup>

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