

N.L.'s new early childhood educator retention grant amounts to 'pocket change,' says this ECE ^[1]

Province announces \$2,500 for certification plus 2 more grants of \$2,500 for three-year recertifications

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Excerpts

Newfoundland and Labrador is introducing recruitment and retention incentives to keep early childhood educators in the province in exchange for a long-term commitment.

But while the association that represents ECEs calls it a good first step, one educator says the money isn't much more than "pocket change."

The early childhood educator recruitment and retention grant, announced Tuesday, replaces the ECE graduate bursary program and gives Level 1-4 educators who qualify up to \$2,500 once they become certified through the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Educators would also receive \$2,500 more when they recertify themselves with the association three years later, and another \$2,500 three years after that.

"A key part of supporting accessible, high-quality childcare systems is to ensure that there are trained early childhood educators working in the profession to meet the early learning needs throughout the province," Education Minister Krista Lynn Howell said Tuesday, adding the grants are open to both current educators and those who have left the profession.

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Howell said educators looking to raise their education level will also be able to avail of the funding multiple times, which is welcome news for educators like Jennifer Quilty of Mount Pearl.

"I'm working on my Level 4, so to know that that money is there waiting for me when I finish, it makes me feel like, you know, there's more incentive for me to finish that. Because it can definitely go towards paying off my debt as being a student," she said.

However, Quilty said the money isn't very much.

"When you have this little, you know, pocket change, \$2,500, It's not a lot." she said.

Over three years, \$2,500 works out to about \$69 per month. The recertification process also takes time — 40 hours of training over the three-year period, Quilty said, which is often unpaid.

Quilty said she hopes to see pensions and paid benefits for early childhood educators in the near future.

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