

N.L. commits to offering medical benefits to early childhood educators by fall ^[1]

Benefits latest step in recognizing value of ECEs, education minister says

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

Newfoundland and Labrador's education minister says she hopes to see medical benefits for early childhood educators in place by the fall.

Krista Lynn Howell announced the commitment on Tuesday in partnership with the federal government and the Association of Early Childhood Educators Newfoundland and Labrador (AECENL). The plan is expected to cost \$1.8 million, partly funded through a \$306 million early child and child-care agreement between Ottawa and the province.

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Benefits will be managed by AECENL and be available to anyone who has worked a minimum of three months at a regulated provider participating in the province's operating grant — including educators, trainees, other staff members and family child-care providers.

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Having benefits was a key recommendation in a report released in March by the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, which says 57 per cent of educators reported being unable to access health or dental benefits through their work.

The report also said that 42 per cent of surveyed educators were considering leaving the profession.

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Taylor told reporters that recruitment and retention of ECEs will be key going forward, noting a shortage of more than 600 workers as of a few months ago. The province currently has 9,400 \$10-a-day care spaces, with about 2,000 more in development, according to Howell.

More details on the benefit plan and how people can avail of it is expected in the coming months, Taylor said.

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