

Finding affordable child care still difficult for B.C. parents, as province begins pilot project in schools ^[1]

In May, the province promised 180 new child-care spaces would open up in Nanaimo, Chilliwack, Nechako Lakes this fall.

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Excerpts

As parents get ready to send their kids back to school, the province is putting the final touches on a pilot program under which three school districts will provide child care by using empty classrooms and other spaces on school property.

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Chilliwack resident Marketa Turnbull has been stuck on a waiting list for three years as she tries to get her son, now 8, into a before- and after-school program.

She said that, like many parents, both she and her husband, Kriston, work full-time jobs with hours that do not line up with the 8 a.m. drop-off time at Unsworth Elementary where their son just finished Grade 3.

For Turnbull, the choice ultimately ended up being between quitting her job or moving closer to Unsworth, which is what the family did about a year ago.

She said she knows many families do not have that option.

“There’s so many moms out there ... that cannot work because of this, including some of my friends, and it’s sad to see them in poverty being low-income or on assistance, because they’ll make more off income assistance than getting a job and also paying for child care,” said Turnbull.

“I think that the government needs to find more ways of helping, especially [single] moms ... that really rely on the child-care system and are struggling in poverty.”

In an effort to help with these challenges, Premier David Eby announced in May that the province was starting a pilot program to better integrate child care into schools, with Chilliwack, Nechako and Nanaimo-Ladysmith chosen as test districts.

In a statement Thursday, he reiterated the province’s commitment to affordable child care while recognizing the challenges many families are facing.

“On average, we’ve reduced costs for families per child from \$53 a day, to \$18 a day,” he said. “There’s more to do, but we won’t stop driving down costs for parents.”

Many B.C. schools offer before- and after-school care, but most are operated by third parties who pay the school district to use its space.

Under the pilot program, school districts will operate the programs. Starting in September, 180 spaces will open at six schools across the three districts with the province providing \$2 million in funding.

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Related link: New child care centres coming for families throughout B.C. ^[3]

Region: British Columbia ^[4]

Tags: before and after school ^[5]
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[3] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/24/08/new-child-care-centres-coming-families-throughout-bc> [4]
<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/and-after-school> [6]
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