

# Families get child-care boost [CA-NS] <sup>[1]</sup>

The Chronicle Herald

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

In the category of every little bit helps, the province has come up with strategies to help make child care more affordable.

Premier Rodney MacDonald announced Tuesday the family income cutoff to be eligible for provincial daycare subsidies has been increased to \$62,000 from \$55,000.

Moreover, the minimum daily fee a parent will pay for subsidized child care has been lowered to \$1 from \$2.25.

"By making child care more affordable and accessible, we are making it easier for parents to work," Mr. MacDonald said during the announcement Tuesday morning at the Colchester Community Day Care.

He and Community Services Minister Judy Streach announced \$5 million in programming for this year, through the Early Learning and Child-Care Plan.

"This is part of government's commitment to reduce poverty," he said.

The reduced daily fee and the increase in the income cutoff sit well with CUPE representative John McCracken.

Nonetheless, he takes nothing for granted.

"Some of this stuff is candy-coated and they do like to put a spin on things," he said.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees represents early childhood educators working at 11 daycares in Halifax and one in Bridgewater.

One initiative destined to make the operators of certain day cares sit up and take notice is including children who are there part time in the operating grant of \$2 a day. The grant is retroactive to April 1 last year.

Ms. Streach said the grant is to be used to help increase workers' salaries and benefits, and that might entice people to get into the child-care profession and encourage them to stay.

The grant will also help day cares cover general operating expenses.

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"There are qualified early childhood educators making \$8 an hour and they're leaving in droves to work at places like Costco," Mr. McCracken said.

"Because if they're not unionized, they don't have pensions and they retire after 30 years into poverty. . . . It's a female job ghetto."

Ms. Streach said she realizes there is still much work to do and declared that the initiatives will help families who struggle to pay for child care and those who are employed in child care.

The announcement also includes an education assistance program aimed at training and retaining early childhood educators.

"We are offering up to \$5,000 per year through an education assistance program," Ms. Streach said.

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Over the next eight years, the plan is to invest almost \$45 million in further initiatives.

- reprinted from The Chronicle Herald

**Region:** Nova Scotia <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** subsidy <sup>[3]</sup>

budget <sup>[4]</sup>

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