

# Merging junior kindergarten into school system would help children, expand ECE access: advocates <sup>[1]</sup>

Junior kindergarten can help children in child-care deserts, says Kim Dreddy

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## Excerpts

The Jimmy Pratt Foundation is calling on the Newfoundland and Labrador government to merge junior kindergarten into the province's school system, which it says will better support children with affordable care and expand capacity for early childhood educators.

The Department of Education is already rolling out a pre-kindergarten program it launched in 2022, but foundation executive director Kim Dreddy wrote in a letter addressed to Premier Andrew Furey that the program is falling short — currently serving less than 20 per cent of eligible four-year-old children.

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Dreddy said junior kindergarten in the public school system would allow more children to access early childhood education. Ontario, Nova Scotia and the Northwest Territories have already done so, she said, with promising results.

She says it would cut down the number of children who live in what is known as a 'child-care desert' — a postal code area with more than three children for every licensed child-care space.

Research from May 2023, showed nearly 80 per cent of the province's children live in a child-care desert.

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## Care spaces need keep expand, advocacy group says

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Newfoundland and Labrador has 10,900 spaces available under the \$10-a-day plan, according to a news release issued Nov. 4.

Another 2,100 are in development.

The province also helped launch a benefits plan for educators working in regulated care, but Cullen says the prospect of pensions in other provinces are dragging people away.

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**Related link:** N.L.'s pre-kindergarten pilot 'doomed to failure' unless it gets an overhaul, advocates say <sup>[3]</sup>

**Region:** Newfoundland <sup>[4]</sup>

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/24/12/merging-junior-kindergarten-school-system-would-help-children-expand> <sup>[2]</sup>

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