

Federal funding to help create more day-care spaces in Nova Scotia [CA-NS] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Nova Scotia will use \$1.7 million in federal money to create more than 400 new day-care spaces across the province.

Premier John Hamm and Community Services Minister Peter Christie made the announcement Thursday, awarding grants for 22 projects.

They also gave out \$560,000 for an early language and learning program, and \$500,000 to help the inclusion of children with special needs at day cares.

The 22 projects receiving grants include six new day-care centres in Digby, Lower Sackville, Porter's Lake, Hubbards, Yarmouth and Bridgewater.

Rod Franklin, executive director of the Digby Area Learning Association, which led the effort of more than a dozen community groups that applied for funding, summed up his reaction to the \$187,132 grant in one word.

"Ecstatic," he said from Digby. "We have no day care here to speak of."

Franklin said there are plans to build an addition on the elementary school with space for up to 30 children.

He said he hopes the day-care centre will help keep more young mothers in school and will also help his group's efforts to get more adults into literacy and upgrading programs.

The Digby application was one of 37 submitted to the Department of Community Services. The total funding requested was \$5.7 million.

At the Wee Care Developmental Centre in Halifax, executive director Dawn MacFarlane-Smith said its \$24,678 grant will be used to complete a gym and classroom, allowing the centre to add about 12 more spaces.

"It's going to allow us to do it faster," she said. "Some families have been waiting close to two years to come in here."

According to the Department of Community Services, the grants should create 329 full-day spaces and 74 part-day spaces.

The \$2.7 million awarded Thursday is part of Ottawa's five-year program to provide \$2.2 billion for early childhood development.

Nova Scotia's portion of the program, which started last year, is \$66 million.

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