

# N.S. government promises more money for day cares, child development [CA-NS] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

Nova Scotia day cares got a big boost Wednesday when the province announced \$66 million in spending on those facilities and on child development programs.

While most of the money will be used to hike salaries, child-care workers haven't started celebrating yet: they don't know exactly how much of the funding they'll see, or when.

Health Minister Jamie Muir and Community Services Minister Peter Christie told a news conference at Northwood Child Care Centre in Halifax that the money will be spent over the next five years.

Muir said \$1.5 million will be spent this year to expand the home-visit program so that every new mother in the province will be seen by a public-health nurse, up from 80 per cent of new mothers.

"We believe that a healthy population begins with healthy babies," Muir said.

He said 40 public-health nurses will be hired in the next two years to visit each of the 10,000 babies born annually in the province.

An additional 25 "lay home visitors" - people without medical backgrounds - will visit families needing continuing educational support. Christie said \$6 million will be spent this year to train child-care workers and improve their salaries.

"We know we have to stabilize that sector, we know we have to increase wages," Christie said, pointing to problems retaining and recruiting qualified people under existing wages. Nova Scotia's 1,500 child-care workers earn an average \$17,391 a year.

An additional \$1.6 million will be spent to develop a system for helping parents find child care and other services in their area. The fund will also start up new non-profit child-care centres across the province.

"We want day-care centres to start in remote areas of the province and to provide for those areas where we have waiting lists," Christie said. "How much and what we bring them up to has yet to be determined. Until we develop a formula, and start working with the sector, we won't know that amount."

He said pay raises would be retroactive to April 1 and that child-care providers should see a difference in their cheques this fall.

However, not knowing how much money will make it into her pocket upsets Hope Longard.

Longard is a child-care provider at the Kids are Kids centre in Halifax, but also works evenings and weekends at a retail store to make ends meet. "I'm about to get married and it's a struggle, and I'm most likely going to have to put my wedding off," she said.

"I just feel like I get a slap in the face when they're saying, well it's the fall."

Margie Vigneault, executive director of the North End Community Day Care Centre, also wants to know how the money will affect her employees.

"It looks encouraging, but at the same time we haven't heard anything specific," Vigneault said, adding she's been unable to give her employees a raise in more than two years. "At this time we don't know if there is going to be a substantial increase in funding to address this issue, or if it's going to be a few crumbs."

Reprinted from The Halifax Chronicle-Herald

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

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

funding <sup>[4]</sup>

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