

Fighting poverty with new child care ^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

The provincial government recently announced a bold new law that could move us closer to our vision of a prosperous New Brunswick, where our population grows and our young do not leave the province.

This groundbreaking legislation, the Early Learning and Child Care Act, is part of the province's poverty reduction plan. It could contribute more to our province's goal of self-sufficiency than any other commitment made by the government.

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It doesn't get much better than this. However, not all child care investments are created equal. To get the greatest social and economic benefits, the government must ensure it follows best practices and heeds the accumulated Canadian and international evidence on where to invest public dollars so that they make a real difference.

To meet the objectives of economic prosperity, population growth and poverty reduction, the government's Early Learning and Child Care Act will need to have teeth and mandate how public funds are used based on the lessons learned by other jurisdictions and nations.

First, New Brunswick must move away from the failed market-based reliance on parents' ability to pay, which leads to the high parent fees that we see today. Instead, the province must provide funding directly to child care programs so that they can have a measure of security and be able to plan for the long-term. Programs accessing public dollars, in return, must be accountable for lowering parent fees.

Second, all new spaces should be created in non-profit and public programs - with a grandfather clause to ensure that all existing programs receive available public funds, assuming that they meet the accountability criteria.

Currently, there is no coherent planning to meet community needs and no assurance that programs will be there for families from one day to the next. Planned, adequately funded programs delivered locally with community involvement have a proven track record of providing better access, creating conditions for high quality programs, and ensuring inclusiveness and affordability.

Along with the legislation, the government has committed to a significant expansion of early childhood services by 2015 to ensure 20 per cent of infants and 50 per cent of children aged 2 to 5 have access to regulated programs. To this, we can only say bravo!

Again, success will depend on ensuring all expansion takes place in the non-profit and public sectors. It is also critical that the government assume a greater role in planning and providing services. Already, there are encouraging signs that the government might be leaning this way since it is piloting early childhood demonstration sites in four communities. Making early learning and child care a policy and funding priority could very well prove to be the key to New Brunswick's ability to achieve decisive transformational change.

Hopefully, the government won't waste this golden opportunity - or taxpayer dollars - and instead lead the way in doing what's right and smart for this and future generations.

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- reprinted from the New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal

Region: New Brunswick ^[2]

Tags: poverty ^[3]

spaces ^[4]

legislation and regulation ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/10/01/fighting-poverty-new-child-care>

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