

Help with child care costs^[1]

Province will spend 5 million more to create 400 new subsidized spaces, improve salaries for workers

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EXCERPTS

Margaret Densmore was overcome with emotion Monday as Community Services Minister Denise Peterson-Rafuse announced the province is investing another \$5 million to make child care more affordable for hundreds of low-income families.

For the Dartmouth single mother and marketing student, the funding means the \$250-\$300 monthly bill for her three-year-old son at Nova Scotia Community College's Mawio'mi Child Care Centre in Dartmouth will decrease.

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The \$5 million translates into 400 new child-care subsidies, a new grant for child-care providers for staff salaries and benefits, professional growth, general operating expenses and the elimination of a fee for families, saving those with subsidies up to a dollar a day.

The 400 subsidies are available to qualifying families across Nova Scotia, bringing the total number of subsidies created through the early learning and child-care plan to 1,100.

"It makes a huge difference because the subsidy will allow (families) to put their child or children into a daycare facility, and sometimes that subsidy is a difference between them being able to do that or not and it also is the difference between a mother or father going to work or not," Peterson-Rafuse told reporters.

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The president of the province's largest child-care workers union said Monday's announcement of \$5 million in additional money for child care is welcome news because the sector has been so starved for funding, but it also raises a number of questions.

"For starters, this continues the practice of giving public money to private operators," said Danny Cavanagh, president of the Nova Scotia branch of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, in a news release.

"They have announced 400 new subsidized spaces but those spaces are still portable, which means they can be used in for-profit as well as not-for-profit centres.

"While they have simplified the grants for child-care providers, there is still no guarantee the money will actually be spent on wages for early childhood educators."

CUPE members earn \$12 an hour on average.

The union is calling on the government to establish a public early learning and child-care system that is universally accessible and affordable for working families.

-reprinted from the Chronicle Herald

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