

Province announces new Preschool Excellence Initiative ^[1]

Author: The Guardian

Source: The Guardian

Format: Article

Publication Date: 28 May 2010

AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The province is moving forward with a plan to revitalize the early childhood system, it was announced this morning.

Premier Robert Ghiz and Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, Doug Currie were at an event to release the new Preschool Excellence Initiative.

"Never in the history of our province has so much been done so quickly to improve educational opportunities for our children," said Ghiz.

"This system is being built with one goal in mind - that, as a province, we can do a great deal more to prepare young Islanders for a lifetime of learning. The Preschool Excellence Initiative will achieve that goal by helping to build an accessible, sustainable and quality-driven system - while recognizing the importance of parental choice."

To implement this system, the province is increasing funding to the early childhood sector by 63 per cent, from \$5.35 to \$8.7 million.

"The new Preschool Excellence Initiative is fulfilling a promise to a sector that has been underfunded for decades," said Currie.

"This plan represents Prince Edward Island's largest ever increase in investment in early learning. It provides support to Island children from birth to age four, their parents and their educators. It allows us to work together to build a system that will ensure access to early learning programs across our One Island Community."

Highlights:

- Ensure access to early learning in local communities across the province.
- Provide a curriculum framework through Early Years Centres.
- Address human resource priorities, including better wages, training and professional development.
- Provide options to those in the sector. For those who wish to move to the new model, help will be provided to convert their operations to Early Years Centres or Infant Homes. Operators will also have the option of remaining in business as a private, licensed operation.
- Include new opportunities for educators to become self-employed through the establishment of Infant Homes.
- Offer one-time funding to operators who wish to retire their licenses.
- Provide new and expanded options for infant care.
- Monitor fees for parents by ensuring rate increases will not exceed \$1 per day.
- Give parents a voice in their child's care through Early Years Centres and Parent Advisory Committees.

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