

Newfoundland and Labrador Budget 2011: Standing strong^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Budget highlights: Standing strong on childcare^[2]

Press release^[3]

Text of the press release:

The Provincial Government is committed to providing families and young children with the supports they need to reach their full potential and live enriching lives in Newfoundland and Labrador. Budget 2011 is investing a total of \$16.3 million this year to help create a climate for families to flourish and children to thrive.

"Our government recognizes the importance of supporting the healthy growth and development of children in Newfoundland and Labrador," said the Honourable Charlene Johnson, Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services. "We are taking a comprehensive approach and making meaningful investments in key areas to provide a strong foundation for children and their families."

Family Child Care Initiative

Building upon the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Capacity Initiative, the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services is introducing a two-year pilot project focused on the development of spaces in family child care homes throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Over the next two years, the department will work to support the development of a targeted 400 new spaces in regulated family child care.

"One issue facing young families in our province is the need for more regulated child care," said Minister Johnson. "Our government has listened carefully to the concerns of parents, and as part of Budget 2011 is introducing a new initiative to specifically target the shortage of regulated spaces, particularly in rural communities and for children under the age of two. The new Family Child Care Initiative will stimulate economic growth by providing people, especially women, with opportunities to enter and remain in the labour market by availing of these spaces or by becoming a regulated provider."

Highlights include increased start-up grants from \$2,500 to \$5,000 to become a regulated family child care provider, and infant start-up grants of \$7,500 for homes that care exclusively for children up to the age of two. In addition, an annual infant stimulus grant of \$2,400 per infant space (\$200/month per infant) will be available to family child care providers who care exclusively for children up to two years of age, to help offset the loss of revenue associated with having the smaller group size required in these homes.

The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services will offer training for these new providers and will partner with the Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development to provide on-the-ground assistance with the business aspects of operating a family child care home.

Minister Johnson is very pleased with the announcement of a new Child Care Tax Credit which is one component of the larger 10-year strategy to support young families with their child care needs. Budget 2011 commits \$3 million annually for a non-refundable Child Care Credit for deductible child care expenses that have been incurred. This credit allows for a maximum amount of \$7,000 per year to be claimed for children up to seven years of age, for a maximum credit of \$539, and \$4,000 per year for children aged seven to 16, for a maximum credit of \$308.

Early Childhood Learning

Budget 2011 provides \$1.3 million, part of a total commitment of \$4.8 million over three years, to begin implementation of the Provincial Government's Early Childhood Learning Strategy, Learning from the Start.

Implementation will begin with initiatives which focus on social and early language development opportunities from birth to age three, and with providing parents with the information and resources to help them give their children the right start -- right from the start. Resources will include brochures, resource kits, a website and other tools.

Related link: Standing behind a failing system^[4]

Region: Newfoundland^[5]

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