



Joint News Release: Canada and NWT announce creation of 355 net new Early Learning and Child Care Spaces since 2021

YELLOWKNIFE (March 4, 2026) - The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the Government of Canada announced today the creation of 355 net new child care spaces as of September 30, 2025. As part of the [*Canada-Northwest Territories Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement – 2021 to 2026*](#), the territory committed to creating 300 spaces for children ages 0-5 years.

These spaces support families and job creation in Northwest Territories' (NWT) communities while allowing parents to return to work or school knowing their children are cared for in safe, licensed environments.

This achievement reflects the success of the GNWT's partnership with Canada to expand access to high-quality early learning and child care, through a combination of territorial funding and federal funding under the Canada-NWT Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement – including the Early Learning and Child Care Infrastructure Fund – and the Canada-NWT Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

This accomplishment relies on the dedication of educators, local organizations, community members, and Indigenous governments who make these programs possible in communities across the NWT. Newly created spaces will support the GNWT's objective of an inclusive, licensed early learning and child care system that can meet the needs of all children and families, including those who may require enhanced or individualized supports.

Families in the NWT and other northern jurisdictions face unique challenges compared to the rest of Canada when it comes to accessing licensed early learning and child care. 14 of the 33 communities in the Northwest Territories are still without licensed programs for children from birth to three years of age. Meeting the GNWT's space-creation target underscores the importance of continued partnership with Canada for approaches that ensure equity for the territories – including consideration of northern realities such as remoteness, small populations, and higher operating costs.

The GNWT continues to work closely with interested organizations, Indigenous governments, and individuals to expand access where demand exists.

Quotes

"We're making affordable, quality early learning and childcare available to more Northern families. The creation of over 300 new child care spaces is a milestone that gives more chances for children to learn and for parents to find the stability they need for work or school. But, our work here is not finished. Looking ahead, we will continue to work with the Government of Canada to ensure an equitable, sustainable funding approach that addresses the unique realities of the territories and makes licensed childcare available in more NWT communities."

- **The Honourable Caitlin Cleveland, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Government of the Northwest Territories**

"We're building stronger communities by lowering costs for families. With more than 300 new early learning and childcare spaces across the NWT, we're ensuring that more parents and caregivers have access to affordable, high-quality childcare. At the same time, we're creating good local jobs, helping parents get back to work, and ensuring their kids get the best possible start in life."

- **The Honourable Rebecca Alty, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Member of Parliament for the Northwest Territories**

Quick facts

- No matter the child care option parents choose, the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) provides direct, tax-free support, helping about 3.5 million families, including over 6 million children every year. While families can use the benefit however they need, for many it significantly reduces the burden of child care expenses – in some cases, cutting them entirely thanks to federal, provincial, and territorial investments to reduce child care fees in the Canada-wide early learning and child care system.
- Licensed early learning and child care facilities in the NWT are owned and operated by non-profit organizations, Indigenous governments and organizations, community governments, and individuals operating home-based programs. The creation of new spaces is driven by the dedication of these operators, strong user demand, and GNWT supports such as the Early Learning Infrastructure Fund, which helps organizations plan and develop new facilities.
- The GNWT provides resources for all licensed early learning and child care spaces in accordance with the *Early Learning and Child Care Regulations* including:

- [Northern Experience Bonus for centre-based employees](#)
- [Indigenous Educators Bonus for centre-based employees](#)
- [Dedicated Wage Funding](#)
- [Flexible Operating Funding](#)
- [Early Childhood Infrastructure Fund](#)
- [Health and Safety Funding for Centre-based Programs](#)
- [New Child Care Spaces Fund for Centre-based Programs](#)
- [Supports for Child Inclusion and Participation](#)
- [Free professional development](#)
- [assistance during the Licensing Phase](#)
- [Early Learning and Child Care Scholarships](#)
- The GNWT updates licensed space figures twice a year -in the spring and fall. They are available [here](#).

Related links

- [Canada-Northwest Territories Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement 2021-2026](#)
- [Early Learning and Child Care Regulations](#)
- [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#)
- [Government of the Northwest Territories Child Care Spaces](#)

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