



2019 Provincial Election Questionnaire

CHILDCARE

The high cost and lack of regulated childcare spaces is a barrier to workplace participation for women.

How will you provide affordable, accessible, and quality childcare, particularly in rural areas?

Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador:

Ches Crosbie considers affordable child care to be a priority to drive family and population growth, promote youth retention, and increase parental participation in the workforce.

We recognize that Early Childhood Educators are essential for child development, in addition to providing nurturing and care to our youngest citizens.

We recognize that today's system is not working for families and operators. Parents and guardians find early childhood education to be unaffordable while operators struggle with operational costs and a high level of turnover in staff. Children and young families are falling through the cracks of a disjointed system.

A Crosbie government will increase access to child care spaces for children under 2 by:

- Introducing a grant program to provide non-repayable grants to individuals who undertake renovations in their home in order to meet the requirements to become a licensed child care provider;
- Creating a working group, with parent and industry representatives, to review the regulations to ensure that in-home care remains safe and reasonably regulated.

A Crosbie government will review the operational policy to ensure parents who receive child care benefits through the Department of Advanced Education and Skills will not have these benefits interrupted between academic semesters.

A Crosbie government will explore opportunities to enable early childhood educators to more easily attain their Level II certification.

To ensure that child care is affordable for a larger number of families and to ensure that our youngest citizens can obtain the benefits offered by early childhood education, a Crosbie government will change the funding model to ensure that child care is affordable for more families. Under the Crosbie plan, the maximum a family with a combined gross family income of \$150,000 or less will pay is \$25 dollars a day per child, for children who attend participating early childhood education centres.

A Crosbie government will recognize that paying \$25 a day per child may be a challenge for low-income families. Families that earn less than \$32,500 will be able to avail of a full child care subsidy. Families that earn less than \$65,000 will be able to avail of a partial subsidy, based on a sliding scale.

Newfoundland and Labrador New Democratic Party:

Current fees are too high for most families, and the subsidy is only available to the lowest-income households. Many families around the province lack access to quality early learning and child care programs. Most children under five are not in regulated child care. Quality programming is important for children to thrive and do well in school later.

The NDP would gradually move to a publicly-managed child care program, in order to achieve affordability, consistent quality, and better pay those working in child care. Our goal is a \$25 a day child care program.

We would establish more family resource centres and family day care support agencies to address rural child care and early learning needs.

NL Alliance:

We would begin immediately working with the experts in the field; parents, early childhood educators, teachers and administrators to begin the process of Junior Kindergarten. However, it will have to be implemented properly and it should be offered in already available daycare centers and taught by early childhood educators. Where there are schools in communities with available space, due to declining enrollment, then it should be made available in these spaces, but still taught by early childhood

educators. This would mean being able to hire more personnel given early childhood educators' salaries are not as high as teacher salaries. The school system is overburdened now, therefore JK should not be placed in schools if there are available daycare space and this program should not come under the mandate of school administrators in the school system who are already taxed beyond their means with having to do more with less.

NL Alliance also supports affordable daycare allowing parents to get out into the workplace if they wish to, and not have to work for little or nothing by having to pay for high costing daycare. Parents are choosing to stay home because financially it makes more sense, but for those individuals who wish to work outside of the home this is very troubling. Affordable daycare is a win, win, win for child, parent and province. The more upfront investment we make in our children, the greater the dividend for all involved.

Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador:

We are proud to have implemented full day kindergarten throughout our province because we know the potential for full day kindergarten to not only support young families, and in particular, mothers, but to help children ultimately achieve better outcomes.

We are undertaking consultations to inform the development of a guiding document and phased-in implementation plan for Junior Kindergarten. This play-based, quality early learning program would be available for four-year old children in our province during the year prior to Kindergarten.

Accessible, affordable and quality child care is crucial to the recruitment and retention of families in Newfoundland and Labrador, helping shift demographics given our aging population. Our Government recognizes that family-friendly policies are needed to ensure that our residents, women in particular, can balance parenting with their daily work schedules, and that accessible, affordable child care facilitates increased participation of women in the workforce.

To improve access, we are increasing capacity, making child care more affordable, and supporting early childhood educators in the critical work that they do.

In 2017, our government and the Federal Government signed a three-year bilateral agreement on early learning and child care that allocated over \$22 million over three years to Newfoundland and Labrador for early learning and child care investments. This funding is assisting the development and implementation of innovative approaches to

address early learning and child care challenges through subsidies, grants, bursaries and professional learning opportunities.

We adjusted the income threshold for the first time since 2007 from \$27,500 to \$32,000, which resulted in making more families eligible for a full or partial child care subsidy, reducing parental contributions for some.

Since 2015, close to 900 new child care spaces have been created through the Capacity Grant Initiative.

And in the last year alone, we have made 1000 child care spaces affordable through our Operating Grant Program.

In a report released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives that surveyed 28 major Canadian cities, it was noted that uptake on the Operating Grant Program in St. John's has resulted in a drop in child care fees. St. John's is the only city, of the 28 surveyed, that has shown an overall drop in fees since their first report in 2014.

Building on the additional 1000 affordable child care spaces created since last year, we will allocate approximately \$60 million for early childhood development this year, which includes \$7.4 million through an agreement with the Federal Government.

These investments will:

- Provide \$17 million for the Child Care Services Subsidy Program to reduce costs for individual families.
- Provide \$11 million to continue the Operating Grant Program which improves accessibility of child care for low and middle income families.
- Provide an income enhancement to qualified Early Childhood Educators working in regulated child care services to help improve the quality of child care services.

During our time in government, we also increased the Early Learning and Child Care supplement budget, resulting in pay increases for early childhood educators, most of whom are women, and as mentioned above, we will provide a further income enhancement to qualified ECEs.

Uptake of the operating grant program and the Child Care Capacity initiative for regulated Family Child Care over the coming year is anticipated to increase affordable family child care spaces across the province – particularly in rural, remote and other

underserviced areas. These initiatives will help ensure that parents can access child care in order to go to work to provide for their families.

Through Budget 2019, we are extending maternity, adoption and parental leave and select benefits from the current 52 weeks to 78 weeks for public service employees. Employees who choose to take extended leave for these reasons will continue to accrue service toward salary step progression and their service will be recognized.

Employees will continue to have the option to purchase pensionable service and government will match their contributions. They will also continue group insurance coverage during their leave provided they maintain their premium payments.