

**Everyone at their best...  
from the start:**



# New Brunswick Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan

Annual Report 2018-2019



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Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan  
Annual Report 2018-2019**

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# Minister's message

Early childhood education is crucial to helping children develop an early love of learning, which will follow them through their lives. Early learning and child care services offer rich learning environments where children can gain the fundamental skills and knowledge they need so they can build a bright future for themselves. In order to support early learners and build a world-class education system, the Government of New Brunswick is committed to improving early learning and child care services across the province.

Last year, we rolled out the New Brunswick Early Learning Centre and the New Brunswick Early Learning Home designations across the province. By investing in these foundational years, we are able to give every child an equal opportunity to develop to their full potential. The low-fee policy, a key element of the designation, ensures families have affordable access to high quality early learning and child care services that meet their needs.

The Government of New Brunswick is proud of its efforts in transforming its early learning and child care system. It ensures families can afford quality early learning and care for their children while they are working or studying. As a government, this is a critical step that supports economic growth through the increase of women's

active participation in the workforce. While we continue to monitor the impact of these investments, we know that close to 1,000 families have benefited from access to free child care and the numbers continue to grow.

Not only have we improved the affordability of child care for parents, but we have made it easier for parents to search for facilities by launching the Early Childhood Services Portal. We have also supported designated facilities through supports to operators and educators with the goal of delivering high-quality early childhood education services.

Thanks to the three-year federal-provincial early learning and child care agreement, early childhood education programming has made significant progress in improving the accessibility, affordability, inclusivity and quality of early learning and child care services for preschool-aged children.

As the Minister responsible for early learning, it is a privilege to be part of this transformative journey so that every child gets the best possible education to make the most of their lives. New Brunswick youth will be viewed as top candidates by post-secondary institutions and employers and will contribute their best to society.



Dominic Cardy

## Introduction

New Brunswick has successfully completed the provincial roll out of the new designation of New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Homes as part of the second year of the Canada-New Brunswick Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. This agreement aims to improve the accessibility, affordability, inclusivity and quality of early learning and child care services for preschool-aged children. This federal-provincial, three-year early learning and child care agreement commits \$71 million to improve early learning and child care for preschool-aged children in the province.

This second report details the activities that the provincial government undertook to implement the *Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan* during the fiscal year 2018–2019, as well as highlighting the results of the work completed during the first year of the bilateral Early Learning and Child Care agreement.

## Moving from Consultation to Engagement

Throughout the design and the roll out of the new designation of New Brunswick Early Learning Centre and Homes program, operators, educators and parents were engaged to ensure that the transformation of the early learning and childcare system was responsive to the needs of all involved. The evaluation of Phase I of implementation identified areas of improvement and strength. Following this evaluation, program adjustments were made to facilitate a successful provincial implementation.

Furthermore, the department collaborated with early learning and child care home operators on a designation model suitable for their service type. In January 2019 the Department began accepting applications from early learning and child care home operators to become designated New Brunswick Early Learning Homes.

During this time, the department also established six working groups to support the development of New Brunswick's first Child Care Registry. Working groups consisted of parents and Early Learning and Childcare Operators who discussed topics such as access to services, communication between parents and service providers and the sustainability of the early learning and childcare sector.

Information on the Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan is available at:

[https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/improved\\_early\\_learning\\_and\\_child\\_care.html](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/improved_early_learning_and_child_care.html)

A toll-free number, as well as an e-mail account, were maintained in 2018–2019 which provide a platform for information exchange between operators, parents and government to respond to queries specific to the Action Plan.

## The Success of New Brunswick Early Learning Centres

The designation of New Brunswick Early Learning Centre is a recognition given to licensed early learning and childcare facilities that offer services to preschool children aged five and under through a voluntary application process. The facility commits to providing equitable and affordable access to higher quality early learning and childcare services by removing barriers linked to family income, children's ability and needs, language, and minority settings.

To become designated, early learning and childcare facilities must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Be in compliance with Licensing requirements;
2. Provide services to preschool children aged five and under; and
3. Choose and implement one of the curriculum frameworks: New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care or Curriculum éducatif des services de garde francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick.

Once designated, New Brunswick Early Learning Centres are required to meet the following criteria:

- Commit to implementing the Low-Fee Policy;
- Improve their capacity to serve all children including those with disabilities and diverse needs through the implementation of inclusive policy and practices;
- Create annual quality improvement plans and undergo annual quality assessments;
- Commit to the use of the provincial child care registry;
- Actively participate in on-going professional learning;
- Work with government on data sharing; and
- Create and maintain a parent committee.

## Results

The provincial roll out plan began in September 2018 and was completed by March 2019. One of the outcome indicators is the number of facilities with the new designation. The original key performance measure indicated that by March 2020, 300 early learning and child care centres would receive the new designation.

By March 2019, 331 of 420 early learning and child care centres (79%) had obtained the designation. The province surpassed its target by 10% and it was achieved in one year instead of two years.

Objective(s)	Output(s)/ Outcome(s)	Indicator(s)	Target(s) by the end of the agreement	Principle(s) Supported	Results as of March 2019
Increasing the quality of early learning and childcare services by strengthening and sustaining a highly competent and engaged workforce	Facilities with designation	Percentage of licensed facilities with designation	60% of the first 300 NB Early Learning Centres anglophone and 40% of the first 300 NB Early Learning Centres francophone/6080 spaces in an Anglophone designated centre and 3800 spaces in a Francophone designated centre by 2020	High Quality	199 (of a possibility of 259) Anglophone Early Learning Centres (77%) and 132 (of a possibility of 161) Francophone Early Learning Centres (82%) for a total of 331 Early Learning Centres  6736 spaces in an Anglophone designated centre  4149 spaces in a Francophone designated centre

# New Brunswick Early Learning Homes

In 2018–2019, the provincial government worked with the operators of early learning and childcare homes to design and develop the model for the designation program tailored to the realities of early learning and childcare home operators.

## Results

- The roll out of the designated New Brunswick Early Learning Homes began in January 2019 and was completed by March, 2019.
- By March 2019, 89 New Brunswick Early Learning Homes were designated representing a 55% total uptake.
- 286 children were enrolled in a New Brunswick Early Learning Home, representing 39% of the 735 available spaces in New Brunswick Early Learning Homes across the province

# Affordability of Early Learning and Child Care

The Low-Fee Policy, introduced in 2017–2018, ensures families have access to quality child care they can afford that includes a Market Fee Threshold, and a funding envelope with three components: 1) enhanced parent subsidies; 2) Infant operating grant, and 3) Quality operating grant.

## Low-Fee Policy: Market Fee Threshold

The Market Fee Threshold will ensure a predictable fee structure for parents, while providing operators with some flexibility to adjust their fees and maintain sustainability, and greater consistency for the management of childcare fees across similar community types. The table below is the Market Fee Threshold for 2017 to 2020 with a commitment to review in 2020.

	Large Urban	Small Urban	Rural
Infant	\$39.00	\$35.00	\$34.00
Preschool	\$33.00	\$29.50	\$29.00

For more information on the Market Fee Threshold, visit the following link:  
[https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-bce/Promo/early\\_childhood/market-fee\\_threshold.pdf](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-bce/Promo/early_childhood/market-fee_threshold.pdf).

## Low-Fee Policy – Funding Envelopes

There are two funding envelopes to support the Low-Fee Policy. Parents of children attending New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and New Brunswick Early Learning Homes may benefit from an improved parent subsidy for low and middle-income families. In addition, licensed early learning and childcare services that choose to be designated are eligible for additional funding to offset the costs associated with maintaining program criteria and requirements.

# 1. Parent Subsidy

The provincial government introduced an improved parent subsidy program specifically for parents of children attending a New Brunswick Early Learning Centre or a New Brunswick Early Learning Home. The new process implemented provides parents with an on-line calculator to determine their eligibility. The new process also allows parents to apply for their subsidies through an electronic process, reducing the red tape as well as removing the stigma that was attached to the previous process.

This new Parent Subsidy offers three categories of financial support:

- Eligible families with a total gross annual income of \$37,500 or less will have access to free early learning and childcare services at a New Brunswick Early Learning Centre or a New Brunswick Early Learning Home; regardless of the location and fee charged by the operator;
- Eligible families with a total gross annual income between \$37,500 and \$80,000 will have access to subsidized child care based on a sliding scale; and
- No eligible family in New Brunswick will pay more than 20% of their gross annual family income to cover childcare fees for children aged five (5) years and under who are not attending school while their child is attending a designated facility. This will increase supports for families with multiple children five years of age and under, before they begin school.

## Results

The childcare review task force report indicated that the cost of child care was a barrier for parents accessing affordable childcare services. Through the policy changes and investments in early learning and child care, government impacted the most positive change in its early learning and child care action plan. Not only is childcare more affordable to more families, the new designation of New Brunswick Early Learning Centres has increased the occupancy of licensed spaces considerably. The original key performance measure indicated that by March 2020, NB Early Learning Centres would be providing 6080 spaces available in the Anglophone sector and 3800 spaces available to the Francophone sector.

By March 2019, New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and les Centres de la petite enfance du Nouveau-Brunswick was providing 10,885 designated spaces surpassing its target by 18%. Furthermore, 1439 children (13%) accessed subsidies for more affordable childcare. Of those parents, 850 (8%) accessed free child care. In addition, and noteworthy, when compared to the previous program for parent subsidies, the department has noted a significant increase of eligible families taking advantage of this financial benefit – an increase of 57%.

Objective(s)	Output(s)/ Outcome(s)	Indicator(s)	Target(s) by the end of the agreement	Principle(s) Supported	Results as of March 2019
Facilitate equitable and affordable access to high quality early learning and child care services	Access for low/ middle income families	Number of children benefiting from a funded space in a New Brunswick Early Learning Centre	6,080 (anglophone) and 3,080 (francophone) (75%) of children are registered in a <i>New Brunswick Early Learning Centre</i>  3,890 children (anglophone) and 2,430 children (francophone) (approx. 65%) of low and middle (\$55,000 and under) income children registered in a designated <i>New Brunswick Early Learning Centre</i>	Accessible, Affordable and Flexible	6,736 anglophone spaces and 4,149 francophone spaces in designated centers  1026 (anglophone) children and 413 (francophone) children receiving Parent Subsidy for a total of 1439 children receiving subsidies in a Designated Centre.



## 2. Operational Grant

New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and New Brunswick Early Learning Homes benefit from ongoing operational funding. The Operational Grant rates for a New Brunswick Early Learning Centre are \$10 per enrolled infant space per day and \$2.50 per enrolled preschool space per day. The Operational Grant rates for a New Brunswick Early Learning Home are \$2.50 per enrolled space (children aged 0–5 years, and who are not attending school) per day.

These ongoing monthly funding envelopes support operators in satisfying designation commitments such as Quality Improvement Plans, Parent Engagement, Inclusion Policies, Language Acquisition and Cultural Identity.

## Quality of Early Learning and Child Care

### Implement Professional Learning and Development Opportunities for Early Childhood Educators

The training of educators is an essential factor in improving the quality of services and for the development of children. The active offer of training, through the use of technology, increases access to professional development for educators across the province in both official languages.

Two 90 hours *Introduction to Early Childhood Education* on-line courses, one in English and one in French, were launched in 2017–2018 and enforced through legislation as of February 1, 2018. Each on-line course includes 30 hours on the early learning and child care curriculum frameworks and 60 hours of various topics such as child development, inclusion practices, literacy and language development, to name a few. The completion of the *Introduction to Early Childhood Education* is now the minimum training requirement for early childhood educators without training who are working in licensed early learning and childcare facilities. While educators are participating actively in their learning, achieving the target of 100% as indicated in New Brunswick’s Early Learning and Child Care Action plan is impacted by the high turnover rate of educators, which continues to be high. EECD is working in collaboration with stakeholders to find solutions to this workforce challenge.

Objective(s)	Output(s)/ Outcome(s)	Indicator(s)	Target(s) by the end of the agreement	Principle(s) Supported	Results as of March 2019
Increasing the quality of early learning and child care services by strengthening and sustaining a highly competent and engaged workforce	Professional development for early childhood educator	Percentage of early childhood educators in designated Early Learning Centres with recognized early childhood education training	100% of NB early childhood educators in designated Early Learning Centres will have completed the 90-hour course “Introduction to Early Childhood Education”	High Quality	12% (55/494) educators in NB ELCs with the completed 90 hours course.(EN)  17.9% (90/502)educators in NB ELCs with the completed 90 hours course.(FR)

### Centres of Excellence

In 2018–2019, the areas of focus for the Centre of Excellence (Anglophone) were the development and delivery of professional learning opportunities aligned with the NB Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework; and the strengthening of partnerships with post-secondary institutions, the New Brunswick Community Colleges and University of New Brunswick. District Communities of Excellence, including representation from the early learning and childcare sector and community college instructors, were established within each of the four Anglophone districts. Early childhood educators, together with post-secondary instructors participated in Learning and Growing Together, a three-day institute focused on supporting pedagogical leadership through reflective practice. In addition to attending the institute, participants were invited to attend Communities of Practice led by the District Communities of Excellence in ongoing support of professional learning.



In 2018–2019, the Center of Excellence (Francophone) has established a plan for providing professional development training and resources that meets the needs of early childhood educators aligned and in collaboration with the three francophone school districts “communauté d’excellence”. This will respect the diversity and needs in their region to provide professional development and enhance quality of services. Each is represented by various experts of the sector in the local communities. Three regional professional development forums were offered to educators. The professional development strategy “Éducatrices/Éducateurs + Savoirs=Qualité” was launched. This strategy aims at increasing the professionalization of early childhood education professionals. The strategy included a list of resources to support professional learning and growth.

## Implement an Inclusion Policy

In 2017–2018, EECD entered into a partnership with the New Brunswick Association for Community Living (NBACL) to support designated New Brunswick Early Learning Centres to develop and implement facility-based inclusion policies based on a provincial inclusion policy.

In 2018–2019, Early Learning Inclusion Facilitators from NBACL continued to work with facility operators to assess the current inclusion practices and to develop their centre’s inclusion policy.

Objective(s)	Output(s)/ Outcome(s)	Indicator(s)	Target(s) by the end of the agreement	Principle(s) Supported	Results as of March 2019
Facilitate equitable and affordable access to high quality early learning and child care services	Access to inclusive child care spaces for children with additional needs.	Percentage of facilities with an Inclusion Policy	80% of all facilities with an Inclusion Policy	Inclusive	2.6% (11/423) centres
		Number of children with additional needs benefitting from a funded spaces in a New Brunswick Early Learning Centre	60 (1.5%) of children registered in a New Brunswick Early Learning Centre are children with disabilities and diverse needs who require extra resources	Inclusive	133(1.5%) of children registered in a New Brunswick Early Learning Centre are children with disabilities and additional needs with support 72 (1.4%) Anglophone 61 (1.7%) Francophone

## Develop Guidelines for Language Acquisition and Cultural Identity Learning Environments

Government entered into an agreement with l’Association francophone des parents du Nouveau-Brunswick (AFPNB) with the objective of working with the early learning and child care sector to recommend guidelines for supporting early childhood educators to integrate language acquisition and cultural identity learning environments within New Brunswick Early Learning Centres that use the Curriculum éducatif pour la petite enfance francophone du Nouveau-Brunswick. The guidelines are meant to be tools for educators to provide proven teaching practices in language development and cultural identity for preschool-aged children living in linguistic minority communities.

In 2018–2019, the working committee conducted an analysis of the Canadian jurisdictions on the subject, analyzed various research and existing resources to feed the discussions and the development of a comprehensive manual of basic elements, best practices and resources leading to the development of the guidelines.

## Introduce Requirements for Annual Quality Improvement Plans for designated New Brunswick Early Learning Centres

In 2018–2019, the provincial government reintroduced the Quality Improvement Grant to early learning and childcare facilities that had been designated as a NB Early Learning Centre or would be applying to become designated. This fund was created to increase the quality of both indoor and outdoor learning environments.

Operators were required to use 50% of the funding to enhance or create more natural outdoor play spaces or facilitate outdoor experiences that align with the Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum or the Curriculum éducatif des services de garde francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick.

In total, approximately \$2.4 million was distributed to 476 facilities. All facilities early learning and childcare home operators required to report back to EECD by the end of September 2019 on how these funds were used by their facility.

## Quality Assessments

The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ITERS-R) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R) have been selected as the baseline tools to support facilities in learning about quality improvement. The Quality Assessment tools and process were made available to 424 licenced centres eligible for designation. Of these, 411 chose to participate in the assessment process. In all, 1096 rooms were assessed with the assessments in those participating centres undertaken between April 1 and December 21 of 2018 across seven school districts.

The provincial average score of 4.63 from ECERS and ITERS in assessed centres is well above minimum standard. 73% of completed assessments scored between 4 and 6 or “Good” quality on the 7 points scale.

Objective(s)	Output(s)/ Outcome(s)	Indicator(s)	Target(s) by the end of the agreement	Principle(s) Supported	Results as of March 2019
Increasing the quality of early learning and child care services by strengthening and sustaining a highly competent and engaged workforce	Quality programming for children	Percentage of centres with designation with improved learning environment ratings	90% of NB Early Learning Centres will have improved their rating on the learning environment rating scales by at least 25%	High quality	225 of NB Early Learning Centres (Anglophone) were evaluated with an average of 4.84 on 7 points scale
	Quality programming for children (Francophone)	Percentage of centres with designation with improved learning environment ratings	90% of NB Early Learning Centres will have improved their rating on the learning environment rating scales by at least 25%	High quality	138 of NB Early Learning Centres (Francophone) were evaluated with an average of 4.22 on 7 points scale

## Quality Improvement Plans

Once a facility has been designated and received its reports, owners and operators are required to create a Quality Improvement Plan. This plan allows them to use assessment results and other centre information to identify strengths and areas for improvement, and then work with Assessment and Improvement Facilitators, Early Learning Centre Coordinators, and other staff as appropriate to achieve the targets identified in their plan.

## Accessibility of Early Learning and Child Care

### On-line Resources for Parents (i.e. Early Childhood Services Portal)

In 2018, parents were invited to register on the new Early Childhood Services Portal that is part of the Child Care Registry: <https://www.nbed.nb.ca/parentportal/en/>. The Portal allows parents to search for licensed early learning and child care services based on their choice of location and language. Parents accessing a designated New Brunswick Early Learning Centre can also apply for parent subsidies through the portal. As of March 31, 2019, a total of 4,146 parents signed up to the Early Childhood Services Portal.

## Increase in number of spaces.

For children and families to have equitable access to affordable and high-quality child care services, the objective is to ensure proportional child care spaces across the province according to need by increasing access to infant spaces by 10% (200 new spaces); 60% within the Anglophone sector and 40% within the Francophone sector.

Objective(s)	Output(s)/ Outcome(s)	Indicator(s)	Target(s) by the end of the agreement	Principle(s) Supported	Results as of March 2019
Facilitate equitable and affordable access to high quality early learning and child care services	Access to Anglophone licensed spaces	Increase in the number of Anglophone infant licensed spaces	60% of the 200 new infant spaces	Accessible, Affordable and Flexible	74 (62%) new infant spaces – 62% of the target
	Access to Francophone licensed spaces	Increase in the number of Francophone infant licensed spaces	40% of the 200 new infant spaces	Accessible, Affordable and Flexible	81 (101%) new infants spaces – Target reached
Facilitate equitable and affordable access to high quality early learning and child care services	Access to rural licensed spaces	% of coverage by community (as described by the New Brunswick Health Council)	5 additional communities (75%) reach 13% coverage for infants. 9 additional communities (75%) reach 48% coverage for preschool	Accessible, Affordable and Flexible	19 out of 33 communities (57.5%) reached 13% (or more) coverage for infants. This number is consistent with 2017–2018.  17 out of 33 communities (51.5%) reached 48% coverage for preschool. This is an increase of 4 additional communities from 2017–2018.

## Financial Update

In 2018–2019, the federal contribution from the bilateral agreement was \$ **\$13,626,060.00**. Below are the details:

Initiatives	2018–2019
New Brunswick Early Learning Centre Designation and parent advisory boards	\$9,239,928.00
Centres of Excellence	\$1,400,000.00
Early Learning and Child Care Improvement Grant	\$2,299,820.00
Guidelines for Language Acquisition and Cultural Identity Learning Environments	\$100,000.00
On-line resource for parents (i.e., Child Care Registry)	\$100,000.00
Administrative Costs (Personnel, Reporting, Evaluation, etc.)	\$ 486,312.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$13,626,060.00</b>

## Next Steps

### Quality Assessments

Baseline quality assessments were completed in all licensed early learning and childcare centres in 2018–2019. In 2019–2020 the ECERS-R assessments are being completed in the designated New Brunswick Early Learning Centres only. This will provide comparative data to illustrate quality improvement within individual centres which will be used to support their continuous quality improvement plans per the terms of the designation agreements. These assessments will inform the provincial target of improving the learning environment ratings by 25% in 90% of the New Brunswick Early Learning Centres by March 2020.

Quality assessments of Early Learning Homes will begin in January 2020 using the Home Child Care Assessment for Quality Improvement “HCCAQI” developed by the City of Toronto which has been adapted for use in New Brunswick.

## Accessibility of Early Learning and Child Care

### Inclusion policy within NB Early Learning Centres

New Brunswick Early Learning Centres will have implemented their inclusion policy with the continued support of the New Brunswick Association for Community Living (NBACL) by March 2020.

### Professional Learning and Development Opportunities for Early Childhood Educators

In 2019–2020 the primary focus of professional learning and development is to support all educators (anglophone and francophone) without postsecondary training in ECEC working in designated New Brunswick Early Learning Centres serving children infants to age 5 to complete the 90 hour on line course Introduction to Early Childhood Education. A departmental policy is under development that will require all early childhood educators working with children under 5 years old to participate to a minimum of 30 hours over a period of three years of professional learning and development activities.

In 2019–2020 the Centre of Excellence (Anglophone) has partnered with the UNB Early Childhood Centre to develop and deliver workshops focused on pedagogical documentation which will be offered in each school district in Fall 2019. A video series profiling indoor and outdoor play environments of early learning and childcare facilities in each school district will be released in Fall 2019.

In 2019–2020, the Center of Excellence (Francophone) will continue networking with the Committees of Excellence in the Francophone School Districts to actively offer professional development training for educators working in the Centers de la petite enfance of New Brunswick. The goal is to provide enough training opportunities in different forms in the regions so that each educator can enroll at least 10 hours of training.