

An Introduction to Child Care Co-operatives in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL)

Are you interested in working with other parents to expand the availability of licensed child care services in your community? A child care co-operative is an incorporated, not-for-profit social enterprise through which parents work together to provide themselves with high quality early learning and child care services for their children. These parents are members and owners of the child care co-op and collectively make decisions regarding its operations. Membership may also include other individuals and organizations in the community that support the objectives of the co-op and wish to contribute to its success.

How Do They Work?

As owners and shareholders, each member makes a small investment in the co-op and agrees to pay a fee to access the child care services it provides. This also gives them a vote in the democratic decision-making process. Each co-op adopts its own by-laws which provide the collectively agreed upon framework for its governance and operations. The members also elect a board of directors to oversee the operations of the child care facility and provide direction for management and staff. Members also play an important role in other aspects of the co-op's activities which include participating in membership meetings, serving on committees and providing other volunteer supports.

What are the Member and Community Benefits?

Because the members own their co-op, they collectively determine the types of early education and child care services it will provide to meet their needs. Member involvement in assisting with program and service delivery is also encouraged. Unlike for-profit private sector child care enterprises, child care co-ops generally do not permit extraction of profits for their owners. Any surplus funds generated are retained within the co-op to further its objectives. This not-for-profit status, along with voluntary member participation, helps minimize the costs for high quality service delivery.

A licensed, high quality, co-operatively owned child care centre makes an important contribution to the community development process. It creates new jobs and has a positive impact on workforce availability which benefits both employers and employees. Expanded availability of child care services means less stress on families and contributes to the overall health and social well-being of the community.

Child Care Co-operatives in NL

There are an estimated 350 child care co-ops in Canada, three of which are in NL:

- The Growing Our Future Child Care Co-op operates a 34 space child care facility in Port Aux Basques serving the south western region of NL.
- The Confederation Building Day Care Centre Co-op operates a 58 space workplace child care facility providing services for provincial public servants in the metro St. John's region.

- The Fort Townshend Child Care Co-op operates a 26 space child care facility in St. John's, primarily serving employees of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.

Incorporation and Regulatory Requirements

New child care co-ops must be incorporated under the province's Co-operatives Act, which is administered by Digital Government and Service NL. All child care facilities must also be licensed and operate in compliance with the Child Care Act which is administered by the Department of Education through its Early Learning and Child Development Division (ELCD).

The Co-op Development Process

Developing a new child care co-op usually starts with a group of parents and other community stakeholders who meet to confirm the need for the service and the potential for business viability. The group forms a steering committee to coordinate the next steps in the process which include identifying a location for the child care facility, development of the co-op's by-laws and a business plan. Partnerships with local development organizations, government agencies, and the business community can provide access to financing and other resource supports that are key to the success of child care development projects.

Co-operative Development Assistance

[The Newfoundland-Labrador Federation of Co-operatives](#) (NLFC) represents the co-op sector and plays a key role in facilitating access to information, expertise and other supports to assist with the child care co-op development process.

ELCD delivers a number of programs that facilitate the development of the child care sector. For example, the [Child Care Capacity Initiative](#) (CCCI) provides advisory assistance and funding support for non-profit organizations, including co-ops, that are involved in the creation of new regulated child care spaces in NL. Groups considering the start-up of a new child care co-op should engage with their regional ELCD office to discuss programs available to support the development process.

Additional information about the child care co-op development process is also available through the [Department of Industry, Energy and Technology](#) (IET) and its regional development offices across the province.

Co-operative Enterprises: For You and Your Community!

Co-operatives are businesses that are owned and controlled by their members to provide themselves with goods and services. They are rooted in the community which enables them to better understand and respond to local needs. Co-ops conduct their business based on core principles and values which include self-help, democracy, equity, social responsibility and caring for others. These values help to ensure that co-ops are sustainably managed and committed to meeting the needs of their members and their communities.

Produced by the [Co-operative Solutions Group](#) in partnership with:

The Co-operators,
Newfoundland-Labrador Federation of Co-operatives &
the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador