



# Canada-New Brunswick Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement

NEW BRUNSWICK ACTION PLAN 2023-2026

ABRIDGED VERSION

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# Minister's Message

We have spent the better part of the past decade building and expanding a community-based early learning and child care system in New Brunswick that provides families with greater access to affordable, inclusive, high quality child care. This system, which was recently ranked number one in the country in a report on early childhood education released by the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, is built on the foundation of the designation program, which ensures New Brunswick's Early Learning Centres and Homes meet the highest standards of learning, health and safety.

In 2021, we entered the Canada-New Brunswick Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement with the federal government, to build on these successes.

Since signing that agreement, we have invested an additional \$10.2 million in our early learning and child care sector, reduced out-of-pocket fees paid by families, increased the Market Fee Threshold, and launched an open call for proposals to accelerate the creation of designated child care spaces.

We have increased operating grants for both designated early learning child care centres and homes, updated the early childhood educator wage grid, increased wages for early childhood educators to be more competitive and to help retain qualified workers, and saw a decrease in their turnover rate.

All this being said, there is still work to be done. Over the coming years we are committed to the continuous improvement of learning environments for all our youngest learners.

This agreement will benefit all New Brunswick families and their young children. Not only will we continue to focus on ensuring that parents pay less for child care, we will continue to strive to ensure families have better access to quality preschool learning through our early learning and child care sector. Additionally, we will continue the fruitful engagement and important conversations with families, communities, early childhood educators, operators and other stakeholders across the system that have been crucial to our success so far.

I am proud to witness the remarkable strides made over the past few years. The collective efforts underscore our shared commitment to providing every child the best possible start in life.



Bill Hogan  
Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development

# Introduction

The Province of New Brunswick is pleased to present its abridged Action Plan 2023-2026<sup>1</sup> under the [Canada-New Brunswick Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement 2021-2026](#) (Canada-Wide Agreement), the [Canada-New Brunswick Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreement 2021-2025](#) (Bilateral Agreement) and the [Canada-New Brunswick Early Learning and Child Care Infrastructure Funding Agreement](#) for fiscal years 2023-2024 through 2025-2026 (Infrastructure Funding Agreement).

The purpose of this action plan is to outline New Brunswick's key goals and priorities for the federal funding under the Bilateral Agreement, the Canada-Wide Agreement and the Infrastructure Funding Agreement as well as the actions to be taken in fiscal years 2023-2024, 2024-2025, and 2025-2026 under these agreements.

New Brunswick's overall goals under the Canada-Wide Agreement include:

- Increasing access to high-quality, affordable, inclusive and flexible Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC);
- Reducing out-of-pocket fees paid by families to an average of \$10 per day for regulated and designated ELCC spaces by 2025-2026;
- Providing a quality and inclusive learning environment to support the healthy development and growth of children;
- Valuing the ELCC workforce, attracting more people to the profession, and providing them with training and development opportunities; and
- Continuing to collect common, publicly available data to measure progress, report to Canadians, and to help continuously improve the system.

Based on national and international research on quality early learning, New Brunswick created the designation program in 2018 to provide families access to affordable, high-quality and inclusive ELCC services. Designated facilities offer services to children aged 0-5, prior to school entry, and must adhere to specific criteria. The designation program set the foundation for a more robust publicly managed system and instills a culture of continuous improvement.

The designation program went from a program set out in agreements with operators and guidelines to being incorporated into the Act and its regulations in spring of 2022. This was a critical step to moving toward a more robust publicly managed system. The legislative amendments included increased financial accountability measures for operators; prioritization of not-for-profit space creation; and the authority to suspend funding and/or remove designation status.

The regulatory framework imposes cost-control measures such as regulating the fees an operator can charge parents for child care services and establishes the wages to be paid to ECEs. In addition to controlling fees, there are also obligations to develop and implement annual quality improvement plans and an inclusion policy which results in the reinvestment of funds to improve the quality of services.

By providing equitable and affordable access to high-quality ELCC services, designated facilities have the social mission of fostering the early development of young children so they become healthy, self-sufficient and productive adults and supporting the labour force attachment and training efforts of parents.

Funding under the Canada-Wide Agreement and Infrastructure Agreement is only available to designated facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> The full 2023-2026 Action Plan will be made available shortly and published on the [Government of Canada](#) website.



# New Brunswick Initiatives and Actions for 2023-2026

# Affordability

New Brunswick commits to making child care more affordable by further reducing the out-of-pocket fees for families enrolled in designated facilities to an average of \$10 a day by 2025-2026. Making child care more affordable supports parents' ability to fully participate in the labour force and bolsters children's educational opportunities.

New Brunswick's funding model must have the right balance of supporting sector viability for operators, sustainability for government and keeping costs affordable for families. To support sustainable access to services for parents, New Brunswick will revise the current funding model to ensure it is fair and equitable for designated facilities.

## Below are the actions that New Brunswick will undertake from 2023 to 2026 to increase affordability:

- Increase the Market Fee Threshold by 8% on April 1, 2023; by 3.6% on April 1, 2024; and by an estimated 3% on April 1, 2025;
- Increase the operating infant grants to \$15 a day and the operating preschool grant to \$3 a day, effective April 1, 2023;
- In 2024, launch the study of the cost of child care by engaging designated early learning and child care operators in identifying the operating costs of child care. This analysis will serve as a guide to examine how New Brunswick funds its designated spaces;
- In 2025-2026, implement a revised funding model that will ensure viability of services, greater access to spaces for families, and long-term sustainability for government; and
- In 2025-2026, further reduce parent fees to an average of \$10 a day.

**Table 1: Funding allocation for Affordability**

AGREEMENTS	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Extension of Bilateral Agreement	\$13.1M	\$13.1M	\$13.4M
Canada-Wide Agreement	\$64.5M	\$81.0M	\$110.0M
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$77.6M</b>	<b>\$94.1M</b>	<b>\$123.4M</b>



# Access

New Brunswick's designation program of early learning centres and homes features a set of quality and cost controls that ensures the ELCC system is sustainable and of high quality. The program also ensures the publicly managed system is accountable in its use of public funds. New Brunswick has committed to reviewing the funding formula based on the true cost of child care at designated ELCC facilities.

## SPACE CREATION AND ALLOCATION

New Brunswick committed to creating an additional 3,400 new child care spaces in the designated system over the five year-term of this agreement, with a particular focus on the areas of greatest need. The Province has committed to ensuring that federal funding is used predominantly to support not-for-profit and family home child care space creation.

In the 2021-2023 action plan, New Brunswick committed to creating 2,400 spaces in not-for-profit and home-based child care centres, and 1,000 in for-profit child care centers.

### **While creating these spaces, the province also committed to:**

- Look at ways of supporting the voluntary transition of for-profit facilities into the not-for-profit model;
- Conduct a research study in fiscal year 2022 to 2023 to identify barriers and potential strategies to foster greater not-for-profit participation in the publicly managed system and include potential options in the next action plan; and
- Regular discussions with the Government of Canada on the evolution of the designation process in ensuring the responsible management of public funds.

### **In addition, to support the prioritization of not-for-profit facilities and the voluntary transition of for-profit facilities into the not-for-profit model in 2023-2026, New Brunswick commits to add to the efforts outlined above by implementing the following:**

- Designing and implementing a guide for operators who want to voluntarily transition from a for-profit governance model to a not-for-profit governance model;
- Adopting and rolling out a handbook for board member of charities and not-for-profit organizations;
- Providing training for not-for-profit board members regarding responsibilities and liabilities; and
- Continuing collaboration with Indigenous communities to support the creation of new spaces within communities.

The 2021-2023 action plan also noted that "should New Brunswick see a demonstrated need to create more than 1,000 spaces in the for-profit sector to better meet the needs of New Brunswick families, New Brunswick will bring forward a plan to create additional spaces in the for-profit sector to the Implementation Committee for discussion, for Canada and New Brunswick to agree on a path forward."

Following several discussions with Canada, New Brunswick demonstrated a need to create more than 1,000 spaces in the for-profit sector, notably due to the specific challenges regarding not-for-profit space creation, in particular the additional barriers faced in creating rural spaces.

Child care coverage is notably lower in rural areas than in cities in New Brunswick. The Canadian Centre



for Policy Alternatives' *Not Done Yet*<sup>2</sup> report noted that half of New Brunswick children living in rural areas are in a child care desert. The barriers include fewer not-for-profit child care providers and experienced individuals in the sector ready to expand or create new spaces, a lack of infrastructure that can be leveraged, and difficulty for not-for-profit providers to find individuals to partake in boards of directors due to the lower population density. New Brunswick received fewer applications through the call for proposals to create not-for-profit spaces. New Brunswick is concerned about the long-term impact that the lack of access to francophone spaces could have on francophone communities.

On March 29, 2023, 249 of the 1,005 children registered on the ELCC waitlist had no language preference noted. New Brunswick conducted an analysis, and the findings indicate that at least half of the spaces on the ELCC waitlist with no language preference noted could serve the francophone community. Children registered for a child care space with no language preference noted may come from exogamous couples, newcomers or other parents seeking an ELCC space near their home or workplace because they have to work or study. The need for a space could be greater than the language choice.

New Brunswick has also highlighted all the features of its childcare system that ensure the reasonable use of public funds. New Brunswick noted that its ELCC system is of high quality and sustainable, regardless of auspice, through a set of quality and cost controls that are part of New Brunswick's Designation Program of Early Learning Centres and Homes. In addition, New Brunswick commits to a review of the funding formula based on the true cost of child care at designated ELCC facilities.

To promote not-for-profit space creation, New Brunswick made legislative amendments and adopted Policy 901 which prioritizes the creation of not-for-profit organizations and home-based ELCC in the designation and creation of spaces, as well as introduces initiatives to promote space creation in the not-for-profit sector through this action plan (as noted above).

In 2022, New Brunswick collaborated with Horizon Health Network, Vitalité Health Network, and municipalities on needs assessments for child care in their regions which included surveys sent out to their respective staff. Opportunities New Brunswick, the Department of Environment and Local Government, and District Education Councils within both the francophone and anglophone education sectors were engaged in the development and updating of the Space Allocation Grid to support not-for-profit space growth in the areas of highest need.

**In 2023-2026, New Brunswick will continue to collaborate with municipalities, not-for-profit organizations, community partners; and other stakeholders to identify suitable locations for new childcare facilities in underserved rural areas by:**

- Facilitating networking and knowledge-sharing sessions among rural stakeholders to exchange best practices and innovative ideas for addressing child care space shortages in rural communities;
- Amending the Space Allocation Grid to ensure that rural communities have equitable access to child care spaces, taking into consideration their unique needs and geographic challenges; and
- Collaborating with the Regional Development Corporation to provide access to additional resources, expertise, and networks to support the unique needs and challenges of rural communities in New Brunswick.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation. (2015, September 15). New Brunswick - state of rural Canada. State of Rural Canada. <https://sorc.crrf.ca/nb/>

Considering that New Brunswick ensures quality of service and responsible stewardship of public funds through its designation system, and that the initiatives outlined in this action plan are intended to promote and support the creation of spaces in not-for-profit facilities as well as to address the challenges associated with rural spaces, Canada and New Brunswick have agreed that the province will create up to 665 designated child care spaces beyond the initial limit of 1,000 for-profit designated child care spaces that was established as part of the 2021-2023 Action Plan.

Of these, a minimum of 315 spaces will be for francophone spaces and the remaining 350 spaces will specifically be in rural areas and will count as part of New Brunswick's target to create 3,400 designated child care spaces by March 2026 under the Canada-Wide Agreement.

As a result of this change, for the duration of this agreement, a maximum of 1,665 spaces will be created in the for-profit sector, and a minimum of 1,735 spaces will be created in the not-for-profit sector, ensuring that the federal funding is used predominantly to support not-for-profit and family home child care space creation.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING**

The Province is working with the Regional Development Corporation to provide capital funding to eligible not-for-profit applicants for start-up and pre-construction costs associated with the creation of new designated child care spaces. Funding will support infrastructure projects that increase inclusion in ELCC facilities for underserved communities.

Additional infrastructure funding will also be provided, in partnership with the Regional Development Corporation, to eligible not-for-profit applicants to reduce the financial barriers of creating new designated child care facilities, particularly in rural areas where access to infrastructure is limited.



# SUPPORT FOR UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

New Brunswick is committed to continuing to increase access to quality, designated ELCC spaces for families across the province, with a focus on increasing access in rural areas; in official language minority communities; for newcomer families; in low-income areas, and in support of parents who work non-traditional hours.

- New Brunswick will allocate funding to eight (8) projects in rural communities that will support the creation of 311 new designated child care spaces by 2025-2026.
- In 2023-2026, New Brunswick will fund nine (9) infrastructure projects to support the creation of 438 designated spaces in not-for-profit, francophone facilities. These are in addition to the 315 extra for-profit spaces allocated to francophone communities.
- In 2023-2026, New Brunswick will support the creation of child care spaces for newcomer families by funding three (3) infrastructure projects submitted by either multicultural associations or applicants collaborating with multicultural associations in the province. The funding will support the construction or renovation of infrastructure to create 154 designated, not-for-profit child care spaces.
- In 2025-2026, New Brunswick will fund one (1) infrastructure project to support the creation of 98 new designated, not-for-profit child care spaces that will support both children of newcomer families and families needing extended hours.
- In 2023-2026 New Brunswick will provide funding to support one (1) infrastructure project that will offer extended hours service to families. This project will support the creation of 30 new designated, not-for-profit child care spaces.
- In 2024-2026, New Brunswick will fund two (2) construction/renovation projects in low-income areas in the Moncton and Saint John areas. These projects will support the creation of 67 new designated, not-for-profit child care spaces.
- New Brunswick will provide capital funding in 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 to support between 50-100 eligible projects that will increase the physical accessibility of ELCC spaces for children, parents, and staff with disabilities.
- New Brunswick is also collaborating with Indigenous organizations to increase access to affordable, high-quality, and culturally appropriate Indigenous ELCC.

**Table 2: Funding Allocation for Access**

AGREEMENTS	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Canada-Wide Agreement	\$5.3M	\$7.0M	\$7.0M
ELCC Infrastructure	\$2.9M	\$4.3M	\$5.2M
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8.2M</b>	<b>\$11.3M</b>	<b>\$12.2M</b>

# Quality

To continue supporting and increasing the quality of ELCC learning environments and achieving the targets outlined in the priority areas of investment, it is critical that New Brunswick has trained staff to deliver necessary ELCC services.

## SUPPORTING FACILITIES TO IMPROVE QUALITY

Rigorous consideration and planning are required to continuously improve the quality of child care facilities and educational staff. In 2023-2026, New Brunswick will continue to support quality improvement of ELCC facilities by:

- Implementing a New Brunswick Quality Framework for designated facilities to set the pathway to superior quality ELCC;
- Introducing the Collaborative Assessment Tool – Validation (CAT-V) in a phased approach in anglophone designated facilities; and,
- Continuing to assess francophone designated facilities using the Outil d'évaluation de l'application du curriculum éducatif.

## DRIVING QUALITY THROUGH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

A qualified Early Childhood Educator (ECE) workforce is critical to the success of all components of the 2023-2026 action plan. Providing access to quality early childhood education improves the social and cognitive skills of children and contributes to their future success.

Education, professional development, working conditions and leadership skills have all been shown to influence how they shape children's daily interactions. New Brunswick commits to enhancing recruitment, retention and training of the ECE workforce and will focus on building upon the existing training and leadership pathways.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR RECRUITMENT

The ECE profession has been identified as one of New Brunswick's priority occupations that will see demand outpace the current training and learning opportunities offered within the sector. The recruitment strategy for early childhood education staff in New Brunswick is multifaceted and designed to attract new talent to the sector and elevate the recognition of this profession. The strategy encompasses various initiatives to effectively promote the rewarding and vital role of early childhood professionals.

## DOMESTIC RECRUITMENT

In 2023-2026, New Brunswick will support the domestic recruitment of educational staff by:

- Collaborating with operators, schools and colleges to engage students interested in pursuing a career in early childhood education, and
- Continuing to offer the *Introduction to Early Childhood Education* Course in anglophone and francophone high schools.

## INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT

The 2023-2026 international recruitment strategy will focus on onboarding newcomers and ensuring their successful integration into the ECE profession by offering an online orientation program and developing a self-paced module on the Pathway to Recognition for ECE professionals. New Brunswick will also be developing cultural competency training for newcomers within the designated child care sector.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR RETENTION AND RECOGNITION

The quality of early childhood education is highly dependent on the level of the educator's training. As such, ongoing professional learning has been identified as one of the strongest predictors of process quality and has a positive influence on children's emerging literacy and numeracy skills, behavioural skills and social skills.

The following training will continue in 2023-2026 to support educators in obtaining their Level 1 – ECE Certificate:

- A micro-credentialing program offered by the anglophone sector, and designed in collaboration with the New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) and the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB), will be offered to ECEs who have completed the "Introduction to Early Childhood Education" course and who have been, and continue to be, employed and working with children aged five and under in a licensed ELCC facility;
- Training offered by the francophone sector, in collaboration with the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick, to support Level 1 – ECE Certificate;
- Tuition reimbursement for administrators and educators pursuing their college certificate and diploma in Early Childhood Education;
- A new innovative coaching/mentoring approach to professional learning; and
- A new career growth and portfolio development program that supports the professional development of ECEs by establishing clear career pathways and competencies.

New Brunswick commits to continue supporting ECE retention and recognition in 2023-2026 by:

- Developing an agreement with CCNB for francophone administrators and educators to complete pedagogical leadership training;
- Exploring the feasibility of implementing of a paid provincial professional learning day for ECEs;
- Building upon the existing professional learning hub to support professional learning for the ELCC sector within the anglophone sector;
- Launching promotional campaigns to promote, raise awareness of and recognize the ECE profession;
- Updating, adapting and validating the National Occupational Standards for administrative and educational staff to reflect the current practice of ECEs and administrators in New Brunswick. These occupational standards will guide the work on developing early childhood education equivalencies, certification, and initiatives supporting ECE career growth and development;
- Developing a post-secondary bridging program to provide a pathway for individuals with non-traditional credentials to obtain formal recognition as ECE professionals; and
- Reviewing the ***ECE Wage Grid*** at least once a year.

In 2023-2026, New Brunswick will focus on administrators as pedagogical and administrative leaders to bolster quality early learning environments.

# WORKING CONDITIONS

New Brunswick will be participating in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) in 2024. The information gathered from this survey will support the development of policies and guidelines that focus on ELCC pedagogical practices and conditions that foster well-being, healthy development and conditions for learning.

**Table 3: Funding allocation for Quality**

AGREEMENTS	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Canada-Wide Agreement	\$29.9M	\$44.3M	\$54.3M



# Inclusion

All licensed ELCC facilities must implement inclusion policies that not only support the access and participation of children with additional needs, but must also create an environment that promotes equitable and inclusive practices and ensures services are responsive to the values and diverse cultural beliefs of children and families.

New Brunswick has committed that new space creation will ensure diverse populations and vulnerable children have access to spaces equivalent to or greater than their share of the population in the province.

## INCLUSION & DIVERSITY – LEARNING RESOURCES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

New Brunswick will continue to support designated facilities in their use of inclusive practices into their early learning environments. By 2025-2026, a comprehensive inclusion framework of services to support children will be developed and implemented in both the anglophone and francophone sectors.

The anglophone sector will incorporate inclusive practices by:

- Releasing the learning resource *Exploring Literacies in Multiple Languages* to strengthen the capacity of ECEs to represent diverse languages and cultures in early learning environments;
- Developing resources and interactive learning tools that will support and strengthen inclusion and diversity policies;
- Updating the *Tools for Inclusion* webinar in partnership with Inclusion NB and the Inclusive Communities Institute; and
- Developing an inclusion framework that will define best practices to embed all components of inclusion and diversity for children.

The francophone sector will implement inclusive practices by:

- Developing and launching a free online professional development module with a list of teaching resources for educators on diversity;
- Developing a multiservice strategy to support ELCC facilities facing additional needs involving a child or a group of children. In 2025-2026, a pilot of two inclusive multiservice approaches will be launched in each school district;
- Developing an inclusion framework that will define best practices to embed all components of inclusion and diversity for children; and
- Updating the inclusion web series to better align with the *Curriculum éducatif des services de garde francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick* and the inclusion framework.

New research and best practices offer a wider range of actions and projects to enhance children's francophone cultural and linguistic identity. New resources will be made available to francophone educators and incorporated into curriculum.

## **ACCESS PROJECT**

In 2022-2023, New Brunswick launched year one of a multi-year prototype providing funding for four-year old children who otherwise would not have access to child care. Preliminary data for 2022-2023 shows promising results in the areas that are beneficial to successful school transition, including: language and communication; social and emotional; and cognitive development. New Brunswick will build on the success of the prototype and continue to fund full-time, quality ELCC for 100 four-year olds annually in 2023-2026.

## **INCLUSION SUPPORT PROGRAM**

New Brunswick has been enhancing inclusion by offering support for children with specific, complex, physical, behavioral or selfcare needs. Funding is available to pay the salary of an Inclusion Support Worker (ISW) who works alongside educators to respond to the unique needs of children, either on a one-on-one basis, or through a shared support option within an inclusive early learning child care facility. In 2023-2026, New Brunswick will bring the ISWs into the Wage Support Program for Early Childhood Educators.

## **POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT**

A major component of the Inclusion Support Program (ISP) is to ensure children with specific and complex needs receive support by providing funding to ELCC facilities to hire support staff. More and more children are facing challenges in managing socio-emotional behaviours and take up a large portion of the funding that is intended to support children with intensive and complex needs.

New Brunswick will pilot the comprehensive professional learning of the Pyramid Model. The Pyramid Model is an evidence-based training and coaching framework that responds to children's social and emotional needs which also strengthens nurturing and responsive relationships and supports an effective workforce.

## **INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**

New Brunswick is collaborating with Indigenous communities and organizations to identify areas of focus and establish a plan for ELCC services for Indigenous children that is supported by an Indigenous-led, strength-based coordination process. A working committee has been formed with Indigenous representatives, the Federal Government and New Brunswick to work collaboratively to achieve a Canada-Wide ELCC system that honours the commitments outlined in the co-developed Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework.

Indigenous ELCC facilities are eligible to apply for a licence and designation status. Funding is available under the designation program and includes the Parent Fee Reduction Grant, Operational Grant funding, Parent Subsidy Program and educator wage support for those who follow the ECE Wage Grid.

In 2024-2026, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) and Indigenous communities and organizations will collaborate on the development of an Indigenous ELCC curricula framework that meets the needs of Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqey communities that value Wabanaki culture, language and ceremony as the foundation.

The recruitment of staff and delivery of high quality, culturally safe ECE programs have been identified as priorities. A high quality, Mi'kmaq-specific ECE certificate learning program has been developed and is being delivered at the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC). In 2023-2026, funding under the Canada-Wide Agreement will support working toward the implementation of an Indigenous ECE training program in New Brunswick and the training of Indigenous ECEs in the NSCC program.



In 2024-2026, New Brunswick will collaborate with Indigenous communities and organizations to offer professional learning for all ELCC educators. The professional learning will focus on providing a stronger understanding of Indigenous culture, language and history in anglophone and francophone ELCC settings.

In 2023-2026, New Brunswick and Indigenous communities/organizations will collaborate to identify the barriers and expand support for a pathway to regulation that is linguistically and culturally inclusive to support Indigenous ELCC.

**Table 4: Funding allocation for Inclusion**

<b>AGREEMENTS</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>2025-2026</b>
Canada-Wide Agreement	\$6.7M	\$10.9M	\$13.1M