

Alberta readies for talks on new child-care deal with Ottawa ^[1]

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Alberta will soon begin talks on a new deal that will determine how much federal funding will flow to the province for affordable child-care services.

At stake is a slice of \$7.5 billion the federal government has pledged over the next 11 years to create and support child-care spaces.

Ottawa plans to negotiate separate, three-year bilateral agreements with each province and territory over the coming months. Alberta's share is expected to be somewhere between \$30 million and \$70 million annually.

As a precursor to the talks, provincial Children's Services Minister Danielle Larivee was in Ottawa this week with other provincial leaders to sign a framework that calls for governments to work toward enhancements to early learning and child-care systems.

"Governments have committed to increase the quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity in early learning and child care, with consideration for families that need child care the most," a written statement from Employment and Social Development Canada said.

Earlier this spring, the Alberta government announced details of a pilot program in which 22 centres across the province will provide nearly 1,300 child-care spaces, each for no more than \$25 a day. The federal funding is expected to boost those numbers in the coming years.

Included in the pilot project are 40 spaces at Edmonton's Africa Centre, where Larivee visited Tuesday to give an update on the federal framework and coming negotiations.

"For too long in Canada, and especially here in Alberta, parents have struggled with the cost of child care," Larivee said in a written statement. "That's why governments across Canada are choosing to invest in our children, and give them the best possible start in life."

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