

Lack of child care could keep some Sask. parents home during reopening plan ^[1]

'Parents are not going to be able to participate in that reopening in the same way': expert

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EXCERPTS

As reactions pour in after the Saskatchewan government announced its five-phase plan for re-opening the economy, one aspect that has some people worried is child care.

Child care is part of Phase 3 of the province's plan, but plenty of businesses — clothing stores, sporting good stores and hairdressers, to name a few — are set to open in Phase 2.

Jennifer Robson, associate professor of political management at Carleton University, said the child-care barrier is a big one and could have long-standing effects on household stability.

"Parents are not going to be able to participate in that reopening in the same way," she said.

One of her main concerns is women getting back into the work force. She said in heterosexual partnerships, child care can often fall to the mother.

"How many employers are going to be willing to sit patiently and wait to fill a job?" she said, speaking about if one parent had to potentially wait until school was back on to go back into the workforce.

"The longer that someone is separated from the labour force, the harder it is for them to get re-established."

This can mean anything from not being able to earn as much as they once did, to having this time away translate into an inability to advance in the workplace, Robson said.

Ongoing conversation around next steps: premier

Child-care centres were technically allowed to stay open though the pandemic, albeit with restrictions like only being allowed eight children per room. Some facilities remained open and some did not. Child-care facilities at schools stayed open and the spots were reserved for essential workers, for example.

Premier Scott Moe said the phasing in of child care means allowing centres to go back to full capacity.

Moe said there's not a solid solution for everything right now.

"That is something we're going to have to work through in family after family, community after community for the next few months," Premier Moe said Friday on CBC Saskatchewan's The Morning Edition.

"[It's] an ongoing conversation that we can have as we phase into these different approaches to ensure that people not only have the opportunity to go back to work but have the opportunity to access child care for their children."

Moe also said it's not likely that school would reopen this spring.

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