

Ottawa urged to earmark billions for child care as provinces reopen ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Ottawa should earmark at least \$2.5 billion for child care out of \$14 billion in federal funds announced this month to help provinces reopen safely in the wake of COVID-19, says a new report by a national advocacy organization.

The money, on top of about \$550 million already allocated to the provinces for child care this year, would begin to set the stage for Canada to build a long-awaited national system of high quality, affordable child care for all parents who need it, says the report by Child Care Now, being released Monday.

"It has taken a public health crisis for the essential role of child care to be widely recognized, and for the fragility of child care services in Canada to be laid bare," said the group's executive director Morna Ballantyne.

"Women have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Their decisions about whether it makes economic sense to return to low wage jobs will likely rest on the cost and availability of child care," she in an interview.

"There can be no recovery without a she-covery; and there can be no she-covery without child care," Ballantyne said, quoting economist Armine Yalnizyan.

Federal support is needed to help child-care programs reopen without losing capacity under new safety rules that require smaller group sizes, she said.

As restrictions on group size eventually ease, the extra space should be used to expand licensed child care, which before the pandemic only served one-quarter of Canadian children under age five, she added.

"We need to recover. But we need to move really quickly to expand the number of spaces," Ballantyne said.

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