

House adopts NDP-backed motion calling on feds to invest more in child care ^[1]

Author: Turnbull, Sarah

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EXCERPTS

OTTAWA -- The NDP found support from parliamentarians across the aisle on Wednesday to call on the government to allocate more funding to provinces and territories to help with child-care needs as society reopens.

Edmonton MP Heather McPherson put forward the unanimous consent motion during a special House of Commons summer sitting, a time for opposition to question the Liberals on their pandemic response, asking that they increase the transfer by an additional \$2 billion.

She called on the House to recognize "that reopening businesses and the economy entails taking far more action to support parents, especially women who are worried about going back to work without knowing that their kids will be safely cared for in child care and school."

The additional funding, she said, would go to ensure a safe return to these facilities.

In late July, amid mounting calls from parents and child-care activists for Ottawa to better support families transitioning back to work, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Ahmed Hussen announced \$625 million for child care in provinces and territories as part of the \$19-billion Safe Restart Agreement.

"This investment is in addition to the \$1.2 billion over three years was distributed to the provinces and territories, starting in 2017-18, to support early learning and child care and create up to 40,000 more affordable child care spaces," the ministry's press release read.

Opposition parties at the time argued it wasn't enough to cover the additional costs of personal protective equipment, staffing requirements, and spacing adjustments.

Responding to Wednesday's motion, Jessica Eritou, a spokesperson from Hussen's office, underscored the government's announcement.

"Our Government understands the immense pressure that COVID-19 has put on Canadian families, and particularly parents. We are committed to being there for parents throughout this crisis to ensure that they can take care of themselves, their children, and their families."

She also said her team is working with provinces and territories to establish a national secretariat to "lay the groundwork for a pan-Canadian child care system."

The NDP has long called for the government to invest more into stabilizing the child-care sector amid the pandemic and ultimately establish a universal child-care system – a key party pillar. While the adopted motion calls on the Liberals to allocate more money, it doesn't compel them to. Already NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh is pushing for the federal government to act on the unanimous request.

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