

Liberals take step on national child-care system, promise plan coming in 2021 budget ^[1]

Author: Press, Jordan

Source: CTV News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 30 Nov 2020

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

The federal government is proposing millions of dollars in new spending as a down payment on a planned national child-care system that the Liberals say will be outlined in next spring's budget.

As a start, the Liberals are proposing in their fiscal update to spend \$420 million in grants and bursaries to help provinces and territories train and retain qualified early-childhood educators.

The Liberals are also proposing to spend \$20 million over five years to build a child-care secretariat to guide federal policy work, plus \$15 million in ongoing spending for a similar Indigenous-focused body.

The money is meant to lay the foundation for what is likely going to be a big-money promise in the coming budget.

Current federal spending on child care expires near the end of the decade but the Liberals are proposing now to keep the money flowing, starting with \$870 million a year in 2028.

The Canadian Press has previously reported that the government is considering a large annual spending increase as it contemplates how to work with provinces to add more child-care spaces while ensuring good learning environments and affordability for parents.

"I say this both as a working mother and as a minister of finance: Canada will not be truly competitive until all Canadian women have access to the affordable child care we need to support our participation in our country's workforce," Freeland said in the text of her speech on the fiscal update.

Calling it an element of a "feminist agenda," Freeland added that spending the money makes "sound business sense" and has the backing of many corporate leaders.

Freeland has been among a group of female cabinet ministers who pushed child care as a federal priority even before the pandemic.

A national system won't likely be a one-size-fits-all program, experts say, but it would be federally funded, modelled on the publicly subsidized system in Quebec.

A Scotiabank estimate earlier this fall suggested that creating nationally what Quebec has provincially would cost \$11.5 billion a year.

A report on prospects for national daycare last week from the Centre for Future Work estimated governments could rake in between \$18 billion and \$30 billion per year in new revenues as more parents go into the workforce.

Freeland has made a note in recent days about the need to do something on child care given how many women fell out of the workforce when COVID-19 forced the closures of schools and daycares in the spring.

Many have not gone back to work.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, which has promoted a long-term plan on child care as an economic necessity, said the Liberals still need to provide immediate help to parents and daycare providers.

"The rate at which women are being forced to leave the workforce because of child-care gaps continues to undermine Canada's economic recovery and requires emergency funding," said chamber president Perrin Beatty.

Dec. 7 will mark the 50th anniversary of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, which at the time called for governments to immediately get going on a national daycare system.

As Freeland noted during a virtual fundraiser last week, many women who were toddlers then are mothers now and the country hasn't moved far enough on child care.

"Many smaller things are happening from province to province that when we look at those things, put them together, we'd have a lot of the

elements for building a national system," said Monica Lysack, an early-childhood education expert from Sheridan College in Ontario.

"We just need to make sure that in the end every parent who needs it can get it and that it's affordable."

The \$420 million in to train and retain them was seen by many as a key investment toward that end to deal with what the executive director of Child Care now noted were "very low wages and difficult working conditions" in the sector.

"But we must also see significant, long-term federal funding in the 2021 federal budget so that we can replace short-term repairs with robust infrastructure," Morna Ballantyne said.

Her group and others have called for an extra \$2 billion in child-care funding in next year's budget, with \$2 billion more added on top in each subsequent year.

This report by The Canadian Press was first published Nov. 30, 2020.

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: economic recovery ^[4]
budget ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 2 Dec 2020): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/12/liberals-take-step-national-child-care-system-promise-plan-coming>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/12/liberals-take-step-national-child-care-system-promise-plan-coming> [2]

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/liberals-take-step-on-national-child-care-system-promise-plan-coming-in-2021-budget-1.5210711> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9038> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/budget>