

Child-care operator 'excited' about money in federal budget ^[1]

The budget set aside \$30 billion over five years to set up early learning and child-care programs

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Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 20 Apr 2021

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

In her 35 years working in child care, Jean Robinson says, she's watched a lot of promises about national child care quickly fizzle out, but she's still excited about plans announced in the federal budget this week.

"You can be a little skeptical, you can be a little afraid that this won't go through, but you have to be a little bit excited," said Robinson, president of Early Childhood Care and Education New Brunswick and owner of the Lincoln Daycare Centre outside Fredericton.

The budget set aside \$30 billion over five years to set up early learning and child-care programs.

"The truth is that the tragedy of COVID-19 has created a window of opportunity, which we can open to finally build a system of early learning and child care across our country," said Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland in the foreword to the budget she presented Monday.

The federal government says parents should see a 50 per cent reduction in child-care costs by next year, and only have to pay \$10 a day by 2026.

"This is historic," said Robinson.

"I think that this is really something that could make our province stronger and more people want to live here and stay here."

Robinson said child care in New Brunswick costs about \$35 a day for most families.

She said having that cost drop to just \$10 would be huge for them.

"They'll be able to purchase a home or maybe go back to school to advance in their workplace," said Robinson.

"Really, the sky is the limit, if when you're thinking about paying \$35 a day for child care and then it goes down to \$10 a day."

But there is one concern Robinson has.

Some of her clients have their child-care costs subsidized by the province, so they don't pay anything.

"[What] worries me that the families that are already receiving subsidies will then have to start paying \$10 a day," she said.

"I'm really hoping that the province will keep offering families that are below the poverty line ... some support for their children to attend an early learning centre"

Robinson said New Brunswick is already viewed highly by the rest of the country for its child-care standards and doesn't expect the federal government will implement national standards for child care.

"I believe the federal government, from what I've seen and what I've read over the last year, the money will come with stipulations, but they will let each province and territory continue on with the good things that they're already doing," said Robinson.

Region: New Brunswick ^[3]

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