

Speed of child-care plan up to provinces and territories: Freeland ^[1]

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Source: CTV News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 23 Apr 2021

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

How long it takes the federal government to turn its bold child-care plan into a reality is up to the provinces and territories, says Canada's deputy prime minister and finance minister.

In an interview on CTV's Question Period airing Sunday, Chrystia Freeland says the government is entering into negotiations with its provincial counterparts in "listening mode."

"I've been through a few negotiations at this point in my life as a politician and I think it's important to go into a negotiation, especially with our partners in Canada, with the collaborative attitudes, and that's what we're going to do," said Freeland, speaking to host Evan Solomon.

In terms of a timeline, she said that depends on the provinces and territories and how fast they want to get it done.

"We have ambitious targets, we've put money on the table. I think Canadians are ready to get this done. And the good news for the provinces and territories as much as for the federal government is, this is a policy which will make our economy grow."

A central pillar of the Liberal budget presented on Monday is its intention to spend \$30 billion over the next five years to make child-care spaces more available and less expensive. By the end of 2022, the government is aiming to see a 50 per cent decrease in average fees and is targeting \$10 per day on average within the next five years.

As it stands today, child care delivery resembles a patchwork quilt of frameworks and formulas across the country, with some families in urban centres like Toronto and Vancouver paying more than \$1,000 a month per child.

Quebec already has a subsidized plan, which Freeland commended.

"I also want to say to Quebec and especially to the women and feminists of Quebec: Merci beaucoup. You have shown the way, and the rest of Canada is now lucky to be able to follow your example," she said.

However, she didn't say whether there would be strings attached to Quebec's share of support given they already have an effective program in place.

"I just want to be clear that this is just the beginning of the journey. We're going to have a bilateral negotiation with each province and territory, very much including Quebec," Freeland said.

Quebec Premier Francois Legault reacted to the federal budget in a tweet, not directly mentioning the child care component but stating his discontent with the absence of money set aside to increase health-care funding to the provinces.

"For months, the provinces and territories have unanimously requested the federal government to increase health transfers on a recurring and unconditional basis.

[Prime Minister Justin Trudeau] had the chance to do his fair share, but once again refused to listen to our demands," he said on Monday.

On this, Freeland pointed to past investments but said the government understands there are more conversations to be had.

Region: Canada ^[3]

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