

Child care won't be a 'magic bullet' that sparks post-pandemic recovery: Freeland ^[1]

Finance minister also in talks with Alberta energy sector over carbon-capture plan Raisa Patel - CBC News

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EXCERPTS

Ottawa's plan to lower early learning and child-care costs was a centrepiece of last week's federal budget, but Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland warns that such a system won't quickly repair the economic damage wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I do want to be candid with Canadians. I am not promising a magic bullet here or producing a magic wand," Freeland said in an interview on Rosemary Barton Live.

"I believe we need to actually build a system, and that is going to take some time and some hard work, but it's going to be worth it. I really believe that as a country, we're ready to do that."

The Liberals have pledged to invest \$30 billion in child care over the next five years and slash costs to an average of \$10 a day within the same time frame. The investment is intended to improve affordability, boost long-term outcomes for children and bring more women into the workforce.

Up to \$27.2 billion of that total will go toward establishing a system with provinces and territories to split the cost 50-50 with the federal government. A separate bilateral agreement is planned for Quebec, which already has its own system in place.

Some provinces say the proposal doesn't meet their needs, with Alberta Premier Jason Kenney calling it "a cookie-cutter approach" that would exclude shift workers, people living in rural communities and informal forms of child care.

"I am always happy to talk with Alberta and with all the provinces and territories," Freeland told CBC chief political correspondent Rosemary Barton.

"What we're going to be doing is looking for willing partners, having conversations in good faith."

Energy-sector discussions on carbon capture

Another pillar of Freeland's first budget as finance minister was greening the economy, with the federal Liberals pledging \$17.6 billion for green job creation, building a clean economy and tackling climate change.

Among the measures proposed is a tax incentive to adopt carbon capture, utilization and storage technologies — and hundreds of millions in funding to support its further development.

"The government will move quickly with a 90-day consultation period with stakeholders on the design of the investment tax credit, after which it will announce more details — including the rate of the incentive," the budget document noted.

Freeland said the measures will "turbocharge" the work Canada is already doing on the carbon-capture front.

"I really look forward to working on that. I actually already have had some of the leaders of the Alberta energy sector get in touch with me since the budget came out to say they're looking forward to working on that, too," she said.

Carbon capture involves trapping carbon emissions before they enter the atmosphere. They are then stored deep underground or used to create new products.

The budget drew criticism from environmental groups, who say the practice would hinder the transition off fossil fuels.

Talks with Ontario counterpart

Freeland stepped carefully when asked whether she had communicated with Ontario's Doug Ford after the premier publicly apologized on Thursday for introducing, and then walking back, widely panned COVID-19 restrictions.

"I had a good conversation ... with [Peter Bethlenfalvy], the Ontario finance minister. I asked him to pass on my thoughts to the premier.

And I'm sure he did," Freeland said, without elaborating on the nature of the discussion.

Ontario is confronting a brutal third wave of the public health crisis, which prompted the federal government on April 18 to offer more rapid testing and enlist other provinces and territories to send additional resources.

On Friday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Ottawa was "in the process of sending hundreds of thousands" more tests, and had identified up to 100 health-care workers to be deployed to Ontario's front lines.

"I am very sympathetic to and understanding of how tough it is to be in the driver's seat, facing that kind of an onslaught," Freeland said.

"I was glad to talk to Peter yesterday and we're just going to continue the conversation."

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