

Province wants to figure out affordable daycare for itself: Toews

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Author: Ross, Tom

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EXCERPTS

With the federal government proposing a \$10 a day childcare plan through its latest budget, there is some apprehension coming from the United Conservative Party government.

Finance Minister Travis Toews said on Wednesday that the federal program may not meet the requirements they feel are necessary for Alberta.

“It’s very narrow,” Toews said of the federal proposal. “We don’t believe it’s broad enough to adequately encompass the childcare options that many Alberta families would want to pursue.”

To compromise, the minister said the money should instead be provided directly to the provincial government and then used in a way that they see fit.

“Provide us with the funding and let us develop and roll out an affordable, accessible childcare system that will offer parents a choice and range of options,” he said. “We will work together with Alberta families. I know the Minister of Children’s Services (Rebecca) Schulz has already engaged many, many Alberta families and we’re very confident that we can roll out a program that would meet the unique needs and ensure the flexibilities required by Alberta parents.”

Toews said the government is committed to affordable childcare and they understand the importance, as he added it could be key to boosting the economy by allowing more women to re-enter the workforce.

However, the statement around “unique needs” for Alberta families drew attention from critics.

“I have a very hard time believing that affordable childcare is a priority for this government,” said NDP MLA and Children’s Services Critic Rakhi Pancholi.

Pancholi said the UCP already has a bad track record, choosing not to renew the \$25 a day childcare pilot introduced by the NDP and offering less support for childcare operators than other provinces in Canada.

She said this is not the time to play politics and resist a plan from the federal government.

“Absolutely time is of the essence. I was heartened to see that the federal announcement came with some timelines, that was encouraging because quite honestly I think we have seen the federal government announce childcare plans many times in the past in this country and no real action has been taken on them. We have clear, concrete targets within the announcement from the federal government.”

Pancholi said there may be some unique needs in Alberta, but possibly not in the same way Toews is thinking. She said Alberta has fallen to levels not seen in decades around the number of women in the workforce, and this province also holds an ignoble distinction with the largest gender pay gap in the country.

“Those unique qualities in Alberta actually are more compelling arguments as to why we need, and Albertan working parents need, access to affordable and accessible quality childcare.”

Region: Alberta [3]

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