

Alberta negotiating child-care funding as Nova Scotia becomes second province to strike deal with Ottawa ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Alberta's government says it is negotiating with the federal government over child-care funding as Nova Scotia became the second province to strike a deal Tuesday.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced an agreement virtually alongside Nova Scotia Premier Iain Rankin to move forward on Ottawa's plan to have \$10-a-day child care by 2026. British Columbia was the first to announce it had reached a deal last week on the plan first included in April's federal budget.

The \$27.2-billion five-year federal plan aims to cut average fees for regulated child-care spaces in half by the end of 2022, but would require a 50 per cent investment from provinces.

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney has criticized the federal plan for not being flexible enough, saying it targeted only "cookie-cutter" institutional daycare options that would exclude stay-at-home and shift-working parents.

Rebecca Polak, press secretary to Children's Services Minister Rebecca Schulz, said in a statement Tuesday child care is essential to the economic recovery, and Alberta is willing to work with the Ottawa on a deal that benefits all Albertans.

"(Minister Schulz) has spoken with the federal minister multiple times since this funding was announced and he has indicated his willingness to work with us and ensure flexibility in any agreement. The negotiation process has begun and we look forward to a deal that ensures access to affordable, high-quality child care so parents can get back to work," said Polak.

NDP children's services critic Rakhi Pancholi said the province needs to invest the money in the economy immediately.

"This begs the question: where is Alberta's commitment? Why is the UCP so far behind on this?" said Pancholi at an NDP news conference Tuesday.

"If we are going to achieve a stronger, more diversified economy, we must stop pretending that paying for child care is just the cost of having a family," she said.

Recent labour market research from the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy notes that women with young children saw the largest reductions in hours worked through the COVID-19 pandemic, but during the second wave, men with young children lost more hours of work than their female counterparts, suggesting the pandemic presented a "crisis of parental care."

NDP Leader Rachel Notley accused Kenney's government of failing to take action to kick-start economic growth by not reaching an agreement with Ottawa.

"I'm frustrated on behalf of the women of Alberta, but I'm also frustrated on behalf of all the folks who are looking for work," said Notley.

Region: Alberta ^[3]

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