

Federal childcare agreement imminent, says P.E.I. minister ^[1]

Infant spaces, ECE education focus of negotiations with federal government

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EXCERPTS

The P.E.I. government expects to have a childcare agreement inked with the federal government within weeks and is pushing to expand the number of infant spaces and make training more affordable for early childhood educators.

So far, the Department of Education has revealed little about the status of the childcare negotiations. But appearing before the standing committee on education and economic growth on Tuesday, Education Minister Natalie Jameson indicated an agreement with the federal government is expected "relatively soon".

"Within the next few weeks," Jameson told the committee, when asked when an agreement could be reached.

Jameson appeared before the committee accompanied by several senior civil servants, who provided some details on the province's priorities in its negotiations with the federal government.

Speaking before the committee, Sonya Hooper, assistant deputy minister with the Department of Education, confirmed that the department hopes to make education and training for new early childhood educators more affordable.

"Can you elaborate on that?" asked Green MLA Trish Altass.

"This is part of the negotiations that we're in the midst of right now with the federal government," Hooper said. "I would be happy to come back and give you more details as soon as I have that stamp of approval."

Carolyn Simpson, senior advisor on early years with the Department of Education, also said the province is seeking targeted funding for increasing infant spaces.

"That is the most significant age group of families that are struggling to find space," Simpson said.

Simpson also said the province believes it can reach the federal goal of not exceeding \$10 per day for childcare ahead of the 2026 deadline promised by the federal government.

The province is planning to lower childcare fees to \$25 per day by early 2022.

On July 13, Nova Scotia Premier Iain Rankin and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that an agreement had been reached to lower childcare fees in that province to \$10 by 2026. The announcement comes days after the federal government announced a similar deal with the B.C. government in a campaign-style event.

The roll-out of childcare agreements appears to be a form of pre-election announcements from the Trudeau governments, meant to highlight progress on a \$30-billion commitment from the 2021 federal budget to boost childcare spaces nationally and lower fees.

Region: Prince Edward Island ^[3]

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