

Daycare operators hope \$10-per-day childcare deal can be struck in New Brunswick ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Some in the New Brunswick daycare sector hope to see their province follow the path of N.S. and secure an agreement with the federal government on \$10-per-day childcare

Childcare at \$10-per-day was a federal budget promise back in April, and it's now one step closer to becoming a reality in Nova Scotia.

On Tuesday, Nova Scotia Premier Iain Rankin and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged to reach that goal in five years.

Money will also help create 9,500 new early learning and child care spaces by spring of 2025.

Trudeau promised \$605 million in federal funding, and the province will contribute \$40 million.

On the heels of that agreement, some are looking to New Brunswick and hoping for a similar plan to be adopted soon.

"Our waitlists are huge and by doing this, they're going to need more spaces in the province, the same as they do in Nova Scotia," said Heather Hamilton, owner and operator of Hamilton Homestyle Daycare and Seawood Early Childcare Centre in Saint John.

"We have almost 800 licensed centres in the province alone. And they're going to need more if they're putting more people back to work, which is kind of an exciting thing but also a daunting thing. It's a long process to do that."

Hamilton said the plan in Nova Scotia is a good one, and believes families in New Brunswick can benefit from something similar.

"You're going to have a lot more people in the workforce, you'll have a lot more kids that are in centres, you'll get a lot more socialization for younger kids that normally stay home," she said.

"I think it's a win-win on everybody's spot, it's just going to take some time to get there, and there's going to be some bumps, and we know that."

At an infrastructure announcement in Irishtown, N.B. Wednesday, Intergovernmental Affairs Minister and Beauséjour MP Dominic Leblanc said he expects more provinces to sign on in the coming days.

But he's "disappointed" New Brunswick hasn't inked a deal of its own just yet.

"If the province of New Brunswick and the providers in New Brunswick want to find the right mix, again, we would be open to having those conversations," he said.

"But there are hundreds of millions of federal dollars available for New Brunswick right now that will reduce significantly the cost of early learning and childcare for parents."

He said the plan is essential for the economy, and it could also help get more women in the workforce.

"I don't imagine that a provincial government will want to wait too long to take advantage of that significant investment," he said of the approximately \$30-billion earmarked for the national plan.

Possible impacts on New Brunswick

Benoît Bourque, New Brunswick's Liberal education critic and Kent South MLA, said with the looming possibility of a federal election, a deal needs to be reached soon.

"I find it appalling that this government has not yet struck an agreement with the federal government," he said.

Global News requested an interview with Education Minister Dominic Cardy and Premier Blaine Higgs on the topic Wednesday. Neither were granted.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development says in a statement that it's continuing to work with the sector and the

federal government to “determine how we can best meet the needs of New Brunswick families by increasing access to quality, affordable child care.”

“Our negotiations and conversations with the federal government are ongoing,” a statement from Flavio Nienow, a communications officer with the department, reads.

“We will have more to share once an agreement is reached.”

The statement didn’t offer a timeline of when a decision would be made or when an agreement could be reached.

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