

Sask. NDP puts pressure on government to partner with Ottawa on child care^[1]

Province says it is in negotiations with the federal government

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EXCERPTS

The Opposition NDP is calling on the Saskatchewan government to immediately sign on to a national child-care strategy.

The federal government is looking to partner with provinces to increase spaces and lower fees. Two other provinces have already signed on for the child-care investment.

British Columbia will implement a \$10 a day system and 30,000 new child-care spaces after reaching a funding agreement with Ottawa. Nova Scotia announced a similar deal this week.

The Liberal government's offer was laid out in the April federal budget, which pledged \$27.2 billion over five years, starting this fiscal year, in new spending to help provinces subsidize daycares.

The specific strings attached to the pledge will dictate what forms of child care could be eligible for federal funding, and how much parental fees must drop over the next five years.

At the time, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that the pandemic made it clear that without good child care it is practically impossible for parents, especially mothers, to build a career.

Saskatchewan NDP Leader Ryan Meili and Carla Beck, the Opposition's education and early learning critic, echoed that message at a press conference in Saskatoon Friday morning. The politicians were joined by parents and child-care advocates who spoke about the pressures families are facing.

Meili said the province is dragging its feet in building a strong child-care system.

"What [Premier] Scott Moe doesn't get is that a child-care plan is also a job plan. It's a growth plan," said Meili.

"The more we invest in good quality spaces and in jobs in our child-care system here in the province, the more we can get families back to work building a real Saskatchewan recovery."

'Do I pay rent or do I pay child care?'

Beck said the governing Saskatchewan Party is out of step with the needs of families, and especially mothers who need to get back to earning an income.

"Frankly, we don't want to see Saskatchewan lose out on this once-in-a-generation opportunity. We have every right to fear, unfortunately, that the ... government is not taking this opportunity seriously," said Beck.

Beverly Fullerton, a Saskatoon mother of seven, hopes the government agrees to a plan that makes child care more affordable.

"I am making my way in a community that was set up for me to fail. I've been through the systems that have failed me. So for me to have a job where I can provide for my children, that's my No. 1 priority," said Fullerton.

"But to be able to have that, I need to have child care that I can rely on for my children. You stay at home with your children because you cannot find child care that you can afford. Do I pay rent or do I pay child care?"

Fullerton says that right now, she spends an entire paycheque on child care each month.

In negotiations

Following the NDP's call for action, the province said in a statement that it has submitted a child-care proposal that "meets all of the federal governments objectives while providing flexibility and choice for Saskatchewan families."

The province says it continues to negotiate with the federal government, and hopes to create "high quality, affordable and inclusive child-care options for parents and families."

"We look forward to receiving approval on Saskatchewan's plan and build[ing] on the significant work that has already been achieved in this province," the statement said.

Region: Saskatchewan ^[3]

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