

Manitoba joins \$10-per-day federal daycare plan ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The province of Manitoba has signed on to the federal government's \$10-per-day child care plan.

Manitoba will receive \$1.2 billion over five years in the agreement with the aim of \$10-per-day per child daycare by 2023 for children 6 and under.

Ahmed Hussen, federal families minister, will join Manitoba's Families Minister Rochelle Squires and Kent Paterson, CEO of the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg, made the announcement at the YMCA-YWCA on Portage Avenue Monday.

The plan will also aim to create an additional 1,700 extended-hour spaces in the province, said Hussen.

"There's absolutely more that can be done" in terms of making child care spaces available for families," he added.

He also said the money will be used for better wages for child care workers.

"This is the largest child care deal ever struck by the province of Manitoba in its 150-year history," said Squires.

Squires said she anticipates Manitoba will be the first province to reach the \$10-per-day average for kids 6 and under before any other province due to the province's already-low fees.

She also said the province will set a threshold of \$25 for ECE II workers.

Hussen said each agreement with the provinces is unique, and Manitoba's is no different.

"We've always said that we're supporting all the regulated spaces," he said, adding that the for-profit sector has to be part of the solution, but this agreement was for regulated spaces to start with.

Global News had previously confirmed the plan to join the agreement, which has already been signed in several provinces.

Conservative MP workforce development and disability inclusion critic Raquel Dancho, however, took exception to the announcement.

"The Liberals have made child care promises in eight previous elections since 1993 and they have consistently broken every one," she said.

"Trudeau waited six years into his mandate to make these announcements on child care and it's no surprise that this comes before a possible election."

Manitoba's daycare plan is already one of the lowest in the country, behind only Quebec. Still, the plan could see significant savings for local parents — with fees of \$10 per day, Manitoba families could see yearly savings of about \$3,900 per child.

Parents with the youngest children would save the most, as they are currently charged the most.

"A national child care plan targeting fees will deliver more savings to parents than a tax credit or a monthly cheque ever could," said David Macdonald, senior economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

But reducing fees isn't enough to keep the system healthy and to make sure there are enough spaces, he added.

"Reducing fees must be part of a broader plan, one that includes capital funding for more spaces but it must also include higher wages for childcare workers to attract and retain them as the system expands," Macdonald said.

Whether parents will actually gain access to affordable child care also hinges on significant increases in the number of child-care spots to accommodate an expected increase in demand for cheaper daycare and preschool care.

Without additional resources, a reduction in fees would likely lead to ballooning waitlists for families, Macdonald said.

Critics of the Liberals' plan have pointed to the expected cost to taxpayers. The Trudeau government has promised to spend \$30 billion over five years to set up the plan and cut fees.

They also say the plan would curtail choice for parents, imposing a national, homogeneous child-care system.

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