

Sask. education minister says child care agreement with feds may come later this week ^[1]

Child Care Now Saskatchewan chapter wants to see an agreement signed before a potential election is called

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EXCERPTED

As the potential for a federal election looms, one advocacy group is calling for quicker progress on a child care agreement between the Saskatchewan and federal governments. The province's education minister says it could happen as soon as this week.

This spring's federal budget featured the announcement of some \$30 billion to be set aside over five years to create a national child care system.

The federal government's goal was to decrease child care costs to \$10 a day per child across Canada within the five-year funding period. That is substantially less than what most working parents currently pay in Canadian jurisdictions outside of Quebec.

Saskatchewan Child Care Now coalition spokesperson Sue Delanoy estimated the province was eligible for about \$1.2 billion and said our government wouldn't have to spend a penny more to access those funds.

"It's stunning the province has failed to reach an agreement so far," she said in a prepared statement.

Her statement said she hoped an agreement would come before a federal election was called.

Last month, in the wake of agreements with provincial governments in British Columbia and Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan's Opposition NDP called for quicker progress from the provincial government in making a deal.

The median monthly cost of daycare in 2020 was \$810 in Saskatoon and \$675 in Regina, according to the budget. The most expensive in Canada is in Toronto, at \$1,578, and the least expensive is \$181 in Quebec City.

A deal may soon be coming, said Saskatchewan Minister of Education Dustin Duncan.

On Wednesday he told CBC News he expected to announce an agreement with the federal government for between \$1 billion and \$1.2 billion dollars dedicated specifically to child care, similar to those signed in B.C., Nova Scotia and Manitoba before.

"I'm certainly hopeful that we'll have an agreement by ... the end of this week," he said.

"We've been negotiating quite earnestly over the last week, little over a week and a half I guess it has been. And I think we're getting very close."

Duncan also addressed Delanoy's concerns and said in the time that's passed since the federal budget this spring, the province was waiting to be approached by the federal government to negotiate the terms of an agreement.

He said the province had the appropriate documentation on hand about a month ago, and has since been working to prepare and partaking in negotiations with the federal government.

He said Saskatchewan's deal, like those signed in other provinces, will allow for flexibility to adapt to the differences in how provincial child care systems were established.

"For Saskatchewan, certainly the principles of 50 per cent reduction and driving toward an average of \$10 per day, that certainly is a part of the negotiations, as well as expanding the number of child care seats in the province, that's part of the negotiations as well," Duncan said.

Region: Saskatchewan ^[3]

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