

\$10-a-day child care coming to Sask. by 2025-26: feds, province

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REGINA -- Saskatchewan will have \$10-per-day regulated early learning and child care for children under the age of six by 2025-26, the provincial and federal governments announced jointly Friday morning.

Federal funding of nearly \$1.1 billion over the next five years will help reduce the cost of child care in the province and create 28,000 new regulated early learning and childcare spaces.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland and Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Ahmed Hussen joined Saskatchewan Minister of Education Dustin Duncan to announce the plan.

"We are pleased that this deal creates 28,000 new regulated spaces, makes life more affordable for Saskatchewan families and enhances the wages of Early Childhood Educators who support children across our province," Minister Duncan said.

In a release, the governments said Saskatchewan families will see a 50 per cent decrease in average parent fees for children under the age of six in regulated child care by the end of 2022.

"Ensuring that all Canadians have access to high-quality and affordable early learning and child care makes sense. Not only does it give our children the best possible start in life, it ensures that parents - especially mothers - can work, and it creates good, well-paying jobs for educators," Freeland said. "Today's announcement with the Government of Saskatchewan is another important step in making this a reality for families everywhere in Canada."

"We will also be working with stakeholders - including First Nations and Métis representatives, people experiencing disabilities, newcomers and official language minority communities - to develop childcare options that are inclusive of culture, language and identity," Duncan said.

Georgia Lavallee, executive director of the Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association, called Friday a day of celebration for early childhood educators.

"This agreement will promote economic growth, it'll empower women to re-enter the workforce, it'll empower the women in the early learning and child care workforce, and it'll nurture better outcomes for all the children of Saskatchewan," Lavallee said.

However, Conservative MP Andrew Scheer called the plan a "one-size-fits-all approach" that won't help all families.

"There's lots of different needs in Saskatchewan, lots of different types of families, lots of people who live in communities where there isn't government-run daycare to send their children to," said Scheer. "This big-ticket item only helps a very small number of people."

Saskatchewan becomes the eighth Canadian jurisdiction to sign onto the federal child care agreement.

"It's about providing kids with the best possible opportunity, to have the best possible start in life," said Hussein.

In the 2021 federal budget, the federal government pledged nearly \$30 billion over five years to reduce child care costs across Canada.

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