

New Brunswick now has a \$57M child care deal – but not the one Ottawa has been promoting ^[1]

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The federal and New Brunswick governments have inked a \$57.3 million deal, extending an existing bi-lateral child care agreement.

This agreement is not what Ottawa has been promoting and that several other provinces have recently agreed to to provide \$10-per-day child care.

However, the feds call this agreement an “important first step” towards a broader national child care plan.

Ottawa announced the four-year deal by way of a news release Friday night. It comes after a 2017-2020 deal, signed with the then-Brian Gallant provincial government.

The federal government will hand over \$48.1 million between 2021-22 and 2024-25, while a one-time \$9 million contribution will be made in 2021-22 “to support New Brunswick’s early childhood educator recruitment and retention efforts,” the release says.

While the 2017 deal had a provincial commitment of \$41 million, there’s no mention of a provincial contribution in the federal announcement.

There’s also not much detail about how the money will be spent, other than to say it will “improve access to high quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care programs and services.”

“The agreement focuses on strengthening the early childhood workforce, particularly around inclusive practices through training and mentorship, while addressing recruitment and retention challenges,” it states.

“Actions include implementing a marketing campaign to promote the profession and establishing a process for the recognition of early childhood education credentials obtained outside of Canada.”

New Brunswick Education Minister Dominic Cardy wasn’t available for an interview Saturday, but Danielle Elliott, a department spokesperson, sent Global News an emailed statement.

“This four-year agreement builds on the commitments made in the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework and ensures that funding continues to be available to support child care programs and services for New Brunswick families until March 2025,” she says.

“It builds on our past successes such as meeting our commitment of raising the wages of early childhood educators to \$19 per hour two years ahead of schedule through the Early Childhood Educator Wage Support Program,” Elliott says.

Not the national plan

But while other provinces sign on to the national plan, a federal budget promise of \$10-per-day child care, New Brunswick has yet to do so.

This agreement does appear, though, to be a move in that direction.

“Signing this agreement is an important first step in the provincial and federal governments coming together to negotiate a longer-term strategy for accessible, affordable, high-quality child care in New Brunswick,” the federal news release says.

“Both governments will work together to reach an agreement on the Canada-wide early learning and child care funding commitments that responds to the needs of New Brunswick families.”

On behalf of the province, Elliott says reaching that deal is the target, but it can’t be rushed.

“Discussions around the separate Canada-wide child care funding to maximize benefits to New Brunswick families are ongoing,” she says.

“While our goal is to reach an agreement as soon as possible, we must ensure it addresses the unique realities of the province’s early learning and child care sector and increases access to affordable, quality child care.”

But there has been pressure from Ottawa to sign on the dotted line.

“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,” Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc said on July 14.

“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 child care for parents,” he said.

Region: New Brunswick ^[4]

Tags: social policy and programs ^[5]

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