

With a Liberal government returning to Ottawa, N.S. premier expects child-care deal to stand ^[1]

\$605M agreement will see \$10-a-day child care by 2026

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EXCERPTS

With the federal political landscape looking pretty much the way it did a month ago, Premier Tim Houston says he expects the affordable child-care agreement between Ottawa and Nova Scotia to proceed as planned.

"I think the deal was signed in good faith," Houston said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

Former premier Iain Rankin and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose federal Liberals won another minority government in Monday's election, announced the \$605-million agreement in July that will result in \$10-a-day child care in the province by 2026.

The deal also includes halving fees by the end of 2022, creating 9,500 early learning and child-care spaces by March 31, 2025, and providing one-time grants of \$500 to early child-care educators while the government works on a framework to improve their pay and benefits by 2022.

The future of that deal could have been in jeopardy pending the outcome of Monday's federal election, as Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole said he would scrap deals provinces signed with Trudeau ahead of the election.

Houston said Rankin and Trudeau felt at the time that the deal was in the best interest of the province and he agrees.

"We'll always look for opportunities to improve situations, to do a little better for Nova Scotians, but that's up to us to build the case to Ottawa and that will be my focus."

The premier said he's not sure how quickly the parameters of the deal will begin to fall into place, but he's hoping for a meeting soon with Trudeau, at which point he can get more information.

"There's a lot of things to talk about," he said.

At the top of Houston's list is more money for health care.

Looking for help on health care

The Tories ran their own election campaign on a promise to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to overhaul the health-care system in the province, and while Houston didn't hinge his plans on help from Ottawa, he did point to how those plans could be augmented with more money from the federal government.

Most notably was a promise to build 2,500 new long-term care beds without federal help, but 3,500 if Ottawa is willing to kick in.

Houston is spending most of this week touring the province as he, Health Minister Michelle Thompson and senior officials hear directly from health-care workers. The premier said those meetings will inform the message he shares with Trudeau and the federal government.

"Just looking people in the eyes and hearing their stories and just feeling their sense of hope that things can be better, I mean, you can't get that from a briefing note."

Region: Nova Scotia ^[3]

Tags: federal election 2021 ^[4]

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