

# Sask., feds take first step toward alleviating child care costs <sup>[1]</sup>

Families with children under the age of six are eligible to receive a fee reduction grant ranging from up to \$306/month up to \$395/month.

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

A federal-provincial agreement that would allow child care fees in Saskatchewan reach an average of \$10 a day in the next five years has taken an important first step.

The provincial government announced on Friday that money from Ottawa's \$10-a-day child care plan will be dispersed to licensed daycares in the province, reducing out-of-pocket fees by about half by the end of 2022.

Federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Karina Gould shared the news with a room of parents, staff and five-year-olds at the YMCA Northwest Childcare Centre in Regina over Zoom.

"I think it's really good news," Gould said in an interview. "This was a decision made by the Government of Saskatchewan ... when they were looking at the funding that they had available for this year and how they could use it effectively. And so they made the decision that they could do this."

The province signed onto the plan in August. The announcement makes Saskatchewan the first jurisdiction to hit the approximately 50 per cent fee reduction target, Gould said.

Families with children under the age of six are eligible to receive the fee reduction grant, ranging from up to \$306/month to up to \$395/month depending on the age of child and how much their provider currently charges. Parents can also expect a refund for a portion of fees they have paid dating back to July 1, 2021.

Parent Angela Hounjet said she was alerted to the high demand for licensed childcare spots when friends told her to get on a waitlist as soon as she and her partner found out they were expecting.

Before "a stroke of luck" led to the YMCA, Hounjet said she'd called every single licensed daycare in the city looking for spots for her two children.

"It was absolutely, completely stressful. Very overwhelming. It left me ... distraught. Because I knew I was returning to work but I had no place to put my children."

YMCA Northwest childcare director Toni Nisbet said the centre sees that every day — multiple calls, multiple times a day from people who are desperate to find care. Once they do find a space, most families are there for the entire five years, until they age out, she said.

Gould said she was struck by how meaningful the fee reduction will be from a financial standpoint.

"For parents of young children, this is one of the largest expenses they have on a monthly basis, if not the largest," she said. "So this is going to have such a huge impact on their financial situation."

The provincial government said it encourages existing unlicensed child care providers to become licensed. Those that do will be eligible to receive the funding to reduce fees, retroactive to when they submitted their completed application.

**Region:** Saskatchewan <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** Canada-wide agreement <sup>[4]</sup>

federal budget <sup>[5]</sup>

universal system <sup>[6]</sup>

fees <sup>[7]</sup>

affordability <sup>[8]</sup>

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/11/sask-feds-take-first-step-toward-alleviating-child-care-costs> [2] <https://thestarphoenix.com/news/saskatchewan/saskatchewan-federal-government-take-first-step-toward-10-a-day-child-care> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7858> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9206> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-budget> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9083> [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/fees> [8] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability>