

New Brunswick signs on to \$10-a-day child-care deal with Ottawa^[1]

Agreement worth \$544 million over the next five years

Author: Urquhart, Mia

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EXCERPTS

New Brunswick has signed a deal with Ottawa that will eventually reduce child-care costs to \$10 per day.

In making the announcement on Monday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said "by this time next year, child-care fees for families across New Brunswick will be cut in half."

Within five years, the average price for child care in New Brunswick will be \$10 a day. That will save families about \$7,500 a year on average, said Trudeau, who had mistakenly said this would happen in 10 years but was later corrected.

The agreement features an investment of \$544 million over the next five years — \$491 million from the federal government and \$53 million from the province.

Premier Blaine Higgs said that's in addition to more than \$70 million invested each year.

Higgs said the program will also create 5,700 child-care spaces within the next five years.

"This is an historic moment for New Brunswick, one that will have considerable impact on families. We want to make sure every child can access quality learning opportunities from their earliest years," said Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Dominic Cardy.

He said the goal is for child-care costs to go down for everyone, but exactly how much will depend on family income. Those who make the least will benefit the most, he said in an interview with CBC following Monday's announcement.

He said the province will be able to provide more information about cost savings "in the next little while."

The funding will extend to so-called "for profit" daycares, which are "largely women-run small businesses," said Cardy.

As long as a daycare is regulated or "designated," it will be covered by the new agreement.

Wages to increase

A news release from the province said wages of early childhood educators will increase by nearly 25 per cent under the agreement, and more training opportunities will also be created.

"We're going to support workers in early childhood education with a wage grid, and we'll boost the number of trained educators as well," Higgs said.

"The bottom line is we're going to make life more affordable. We're going to grow the economy by allowing more parents, particularly moms, to rejoin the workforce, and we're going to give kids the best possible start as they begin their schooling."

Trudeau said increasing wages and improving training are "just as important" as reducing costs for parents.

He said it's important to send the message that early child care "is an extraordinarily valued and important career choice for young women and men in New Brunswick to choose."

The federal budget allocated \$27.2 billion over five years to the provinces and territories, starting in the current fiscal year, to halve the cost of child care in Canada in the first year and reduce fees to \$10 a day by 2025-26 while creating new spaces.

With New Brunswick and the Northwest Territories now on board, that leaves Ontario the only province that hasn't yet committed to the program.

The New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity welcomed the child-care announcement.

"This is a transformative agreement for New Brunswick women and parents," said Krysta Cowling, the coalition's chair.

"We have advocated for accessible, affordable and inclusive child care for decades. This is essential to women's full participation in the workforce and hence their financial independence."

Cowling said the 25 per cent wage increase in the agreement — bringing wages to \$23.47 an hour over five years — is also welcome news for early childhood educators.

"The wage increase for the sector's predominantly female workforce is a positive development. However, reaching pay equity is imperative to ensure that this work is fairly compensated and valued.

"Quality services depend on quality jobs."

Region: New Brunswick ^[3]

Tags: \$10aDay ^[4]

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