

Sask. child care centres gear up for affordability plan^[1]

Child care centres in Saskatchewan have been busy fielding questions from parents and guardians. It's expected rebates will be available in January.

Author: Simes, Jeremy

Source: Regina Leader-Post

Format: Article

Publication Date: 3 Jan 2022

AVAILABILITY

Access online^[2]

EXCERPTS

Megan Schmidt has been doing lots of extra work in preparation for the province's affordable child care plan.

Article content

The work includes answering multiple questions from parents about fees and eligibility, as well as piles of paperwork, said Schmidt, the director and pedagogical leader at First Years Learning Center in east Regina.

"I think it's really interesting to see this happening," she said. "If you would have told me 17 years ago when I entered the profession that I would see this in my life, I probably would have laughed in your face because I didn't think it would be a thing."

First Years Learning Center is among hundreds of child care facilities in the province preparing for the plan, which aims to create 28,000 new regulated spaces for children under six years old within the next five years.

The goal of the plan, which saw \$1.1 billion in federal funds, is to bring fees for regulated child care down to \$10 per day on average within the next five years. By the end of 2022, the province anticipates average fees will fall by 50 per cent and that 22,000 will benefit.

Operators have previously said child care fees can range from \$800 per month to as much as \$1,925 a month, depending on the municipality.

"I'm looking forward to the affordability for families. This is going to give them a helping hand," Schmidt said. "I have previously worked as a home support person outside of child care, and the biggest thing I found with clients is they couldn't afford child care even with a subsidy."

Parents and guardians can likely expect rebates in January, the Ministry of Education said in a Dec. 30 emailed statement. It said regulated child care facilities will issue the refunds.

Article content

In early December, the ministry announced 601 regulated spaces will be allocated across the province. Some of these spaces are already open, while others are expected to open in January.

Of these 601 new spaces, 93 will be in Regina, 56 in Saskatoon and 50 in Prince Albert. The remaining 402 spaces will be in smaller communities.

"All families who have children under six attending licensed child care will benefit from the parent fee reduction grant," the ministry said. "The funding is targeted directly to families that pay child care fees over \$200 a month."

While child care operators are looking forward to the plan, there have been some hurdles along the way.

The biggest challenge is the unknown, said Angie Stevenson, the chairperson of the Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association.

"It's the same situation across the country, where we are all anticipating what the next steps might be," Stevenson said. "We're all excited in seeing some progress and there is lots of necessary work to build that system."

Like Stevenson, Schmidt said there are lots of unknowns, though colleagues have been supportive.

"It's kind of uncertain at times, but that's like with any major change," she said. "We're used to changing and pivoting all the time. It's just part of the job now."

Schmidt said she expects higher demand for child care services as it becomes more affordable, though her centre already has a wait-list of 1,300 children.

"Some parents with children in unlicensed homes are now considering switching to a regulated facility, but I always tell them it's really up

to them (on switching) based on what they need and what's right for their family," she said.

Over at Stepping Stones Child Care in Regina, Director Donna Rice also expects higher demand for services.

"Some parents will continue to use private (non-regulated) facilities for various reasons, but I expect those homes will slowly die out," she said.

As for the rollout of the plan, Rice said it's been a little slower than expected.

"When it comes, it'll be great and when we move forward, it'll be great. We just have to wait a bit longer for it to come," she said.

Region: Saskatchewan ^[3]

Tags: affordability ^[4]

universal system ^[5]

funding ^[6]

federal budget ^[7]

Source URL (modified on 5 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/01/sask-child-care-centres-gear-affordability-plan>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/01/sask-child-care-centres-gear-affordability-plan> [2] <https://leaderpost.com/news/sask-child-care-centres-gear-up-for-affordability-plan> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7858> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9083> [6]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-budget>