

B.C. Budget: Child care fees for infants, toddlers dropping to \$20 per day by 2023 ^[1]

Province expects 40,000 new spots to open in next seven years

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EXCERPTS

While B.C. was the first province to sign a \$10-a-day-child-care agreement with the federal government, the province will only reduce costs to about double that for next couple years.

Full-day infant and toddler care fees will drop to an average of about \$20 per day by the end of this year, with the cost for before- and after-school and preschool falling to that rate by the 2023/2024 school year. The province said 50,000 children will benefit from the reduced fees, which represent a 50 per cent cut in average costs.

B.C.'s 2022 budget, released Tuesday, pumps \$118 million into those targeted fee reductions.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the child-care agreement with B.C. last summer. It aims to hit the \$10-a-day mark in regulated spaces – for children under six years old – before 2027.

According to the budget, the agreement is also expected to help deliver 30,000 new child-care spaces for children under the age of six within the next five years, rising to 40,000 new spots over the next seven years.

The 2022 budget includes \$11 million for upping the number school districts offering child care services, with before- and after-school spaces expanding from 24 to 44 districts. Preschool programs will be expanded to 14 more school districts as well.

"This is going to make a real difference for families," Finance Minister Selina Robinson said while presenting the budget. "Providing child care services is not just a pillar of building a stronger society, but it also helps build a stronger, more resilient economy and allows families, especially women, to participate in the labour force."

But asked why child care will still be about twice as much as the federal agreement's pursues for the foreseeable future, Robinson said building a brand new social program takes time.

The province is also investing \$8 million from this year's budget to add 130 early childhood educator training seats annually for the next three years. Another \$11 million is going into the Aboriginal Head Start program.

Region: British Columbia ^[3]

Tags: spaces ^[4]

Canada-wide agreement ^[5]

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