

\$10-a-day child care spots to double in B.C., but system still faces challenges ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Advocates warn if the B.C. government doesn't address wages and benefits for professionals in the child-care sector, expansion of the province's \$10-a-day program could be stalled.

Sharon Gregson has long advocated for \$10-a-day child care, and said the announcement that B.C. is taking applications from providers to double the number of spots for parents to pay \$200 a month is welcome news.

"It is literally life-changing, fabulous news, and now we need to make sure this progress continues," she said in an interview with CTV News.

Gregson said the province is leading the country in progress on affordable daycare partly because of the early adoption of an affordable plan. Yet, she warned more professionals are needed.

"The challenges of recruitment and retention in the child-care sector are the biggest hurdles at the moment to expansion," she said.

Gregson would like to see a wage grid developed for those working in the field. She said pensions and benefits will also help with recruitment and retention. While the province has topped up wages by about \$4 an hour, Gregson said much more needs to be done, particularly as many industries fight for high-demand labour.

"I was just talking to a friend who hasn't worked since her two-and-a-half-year-old was born – because she couldn't have or afford child care."

Nils Thompson feels lucky. He has two sweet kids, and soon, he and his wife will secure two of the hottest tickets in town: daycare spots

"So far, so good, but I do know from experience with my friends and other parents, finding daycare – particularly full-time daycare – can be a challenge," he told CTV News.

Several parents, who didn't want to appear on camera, told CTV News they were on multiple wait lists, some for longer than a year, and still don't have a spot.

The opposition BC Liberals accused the NDP government of falling behind on a promise to deliver a \$10-a-day plan.

The province currently has 6,500 spots charging \$10 a day, a number that will nearly double to 12,500 by December thanks to federal funding.

In a statement, the province said there were about 136,700 monthly spots in British Columbia. It couldn't confirm how many families earning more than \$100,000 a year were only paying \$10 a day, saying it doesn't collect information on families' income.

Todd Stone told CTV News if you consider all the families waiting on daycare spaces, the doubling of \$10 spots is just a drop in the bucket.

"You're still going to end up with only about three per cent of total spaces, current and needed, at the \$10-a-day level," Stone said.

The Child Care Ministry said in a statement that by December, it will have reduced fees for kids under five, on average, by about half of what they were three years ago – and that tens of thousands of families are saving on child-care fees thanks to several fee reduction programs.

Region: British Columbia ^[3]

Tags: \$10 a day ^[4]

affordability ^[5]

availability ^[6]

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