

N.S. NDP calls on province to submit child-care plan to access millions in funding ^[1]

Author: Power, Zack

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Excerpts

The Nova Scotia New Democrats are asking the province to submit an action plan to the federal government for child care. The funding is estimated to be nearly \$123 million, which would go toward opening more child-care spaces in Nova Scotia.

The Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement was reportedly supposed to see a proposal by the province in April, but according to Claudia Chender, the party leader, the province has yet to release that action plan.

The plan would outline how the new funding would be spent. Ideas around how many spaces would open, how they would be staffed, and a plan for affordability would be included.

According to the federal government, \$123,458,100 was set aside for the plan for the fiscal year 2023-24, with more money in years prior and forward.

In a breakdown of a freedom of information request obtained by Global News on behalf of the provincial NDP, the province netted only 28 spaces in the past two years, far below initial targets.

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Becky Druhan [Nova Scotia's minister for education and early childhood development] said the province has opened nearly 2,000 spaces since the agreement opened in 2017, with a target of 9,500 spaces. She expects to submit the action plan "this coming year."

...

The province said it's working with the federal government to create a new action plan, separate from the one that was put forward when the agreement was first reached.

"The last action plan was one that we inherited when we took office, and we very quickly realized that we needed to go above and beyond and do more than what was called for in the action plan," Druhan said.

"As a result of that, we also increased our investment. So, we invested an additional \$120 million to support our increased wages."

If the province had submitted a proposal by April, the funding would have been distributed on June 15. 2023-24 funding will be contingent on when the province submits the action plan.

The next instalment of \$143,474,017 is expected on June 15, 2024.

"This file has been deeply mismanaged," Chender said. [Claudia Chender, leader of the Nova Scotia NDP]

"We've had an influx of funding and very, very few new spaces opened, and many spaces closed."

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