

Ottawa says it will hold New Brunswick to terms of child-care agreement ^[1]

Federal minister says province must live up to deal that favours not-for-profit centres

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Excerpts

The federal minister overseeing child-care agreements with the provinces says she intends to hold New Brunswick to the promises it made when the province signed on last year.

Families, Children and Social Development Minister Jenna Sudds said in a statement to CBC News that the agreement is clear and she wants the Higgs government to honour it.

"The federal government has provided New Brunswick with almost \$492 million to build this system and we will hold the province to these commitments," Sudds said in a statement.

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The April 2022 agreement commits the province to create 3,400 child-care spaces by 2026 – 2,400 in not-for-profit centres and 1,000 in private, for-profit centres with early learning designation from the province.

Last week, Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Bill Hogan said he wanted Ottawa to reopen the agreement to let the province fund more spaces in private, for-profit centres.

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But in her statement, Sudds said only that she would be "happy to share best practices from other jurisdictions that are well on their way to reaching their new space targets in the not for profit child-care sector."

At the time the deal was signed last year, 68 per cent of spaces in the province were in for-profit centres, according to the federal-provincial text.

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The text of agreement says Ottawa would support 1,000 more for-profit spaces "should there be a demonstrated need," as long as New Brunswick brought forward a plan.

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The agreement includes an objective of helping some for-profit centres convert to not-for-profit status.

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Hogan made his comments about reopening the deal after Opposition Liberal Leader Susan Holt said the 550 spaces promised in the government's recent throne speech were not enough to address a wait list with more than 3,000 families.

She accused the province of dragging its feet on allocating funds to not-for-profit centres.

The text of the agreement envisioned the creation of 500 spaces in the first two years.

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