

# N.B. decision to hold out for better federal funding deals pays off [CA-NB] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

New Brunswick Premier Bernard Lord says holding out for better funding deals from Ottawa has paid off. Lord and his Conservative government took a lot of flak in the province for not jumping at the chance earlier this year to sign federal agreements on child care funding and gas-tax revenues for municipalities.

But it appeared Thursday that holding out was a smart move as the Lord government signed deals giving the province the more flexible arrangements it was seeking.

Lord, reached by telephone on his way to a first ministers meeting in British Columbia, said there's no question that a looming federal election helped spur Ottawa into action.

"As the saying goes, there's nothing like a hanging at noon to focus the mind at night," Lord said.

"They clearly wanted to get these things signed before the campaign is called. In the end, I felt this was good and what we needed for New Brunswick."

The signing ceremonies in Fredericton for the two deals were part of a cascade of funding announcements being made by the federal government in advance of a federal election campaign, which is expected to start next Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, Ken Dryden, federal minister of social development, signed an agreement with Prince Edward Island to provide \$20.5 million over five years for child care.

Dryden arrived in New Brunswick a few hours later to sign a similar, \$110-million deal.

New Brunswick was the last province to sign a child care deal after Ottawa announced \$5 billion for a national program earlier this year.

Dryden agreed with Lord's comment that an approaching election helps focus the political mind, but he stressed that the deals were not last-minute arrangements.

Lord has said he wanted to be able to provide assistance to both regulated day cares and stay-at-home parents.

While the program announced by Dryden relates only to regulated day cares and early childhood learning, Lord said there is flexibility in the program to help all parents and children - not just those in regulated facilities.

"This flexibility will enable us to look at other programs for parents who make other decisions," Lord said. "We won't be able to fund them directly from this agreement, but it frees up money we can use to help parents who make other choices."

- reprinted from Canadian Press

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