

## 2 provinces join Ottawa's child-care plan [CA] <sup>[1]</sup>

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### AVAILABILITY

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### EXCERPTS

The federal government will sign up the first two partners for its planned \$5-billion child-care program on Friday.

Prime Minister Paul Martin is flying to Manitoba and Saskatchewan to announce deals with those provincial governments.

Manitoba is to get \$26 million from Ottawa to pay for day-care programs and Saskatchewan will get \$22 million & provided a federal election doesn't interfere first.

The child-care program was a key part of the Liberal election platform last year, and Social Development Minister Ken Dryden had hoped to persuade all 10 provinces and the three territories to sign one agreement to set a new national standard for child care.

Ontario is expected to sign a separate agreement for funding worth \$280 million within a few days, but Dryden has run into opposition from Quebec and Alberta, which want to be able to choose how to spend their share of the money.

The federal government has set aside \$700 million this year and \$5 billion over five years for the child-care program.

But the money cannot be used until the House of Commons passes the federal budget. And that might not happen if Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois are able to bring down the minority government first.

Manitoba Premier Gary Doer said his government has pushed hard to take the lead on child care. "We were ready to go in November, before all that stuff happened in Ottawa."

But Pat Wege of the Manitoba Child Care Association is worried that children may never see the money. "Until the budget is passed, Manitoba doesn't get a dime," she said, "so that means all those parents who are on waiting lists are going to keep waiting."

- reprinted from CBC News

**Region:** Canada <sup>[2]</sup>

Saskatchewan <sup>[3]</sup>

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