Alberta says it won't participate in national day-care program [CA-AB]

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EXCERPTS

The meetings haven't even taken place yet, but already Alberta is saying "no thanks" to the idea of joining a national child care program.

Negotiations between the federal and provincial governments are set to begin later this week on Ottawa's proposal for a \$5-billion program. But the Alberta government says it has already opted out.

The province's minister for children's services, Heather Forsyth, says Alberta wants to take the money Ottawa has to offer and create its own program.

"We have said 'no, we won't be signing any agreement,' because we do not want to be told from Ottawa where our parents have to go, or where our children have to go. We want parents in this province to have [a] choice."

Forsyth says the Alberta plan would go beyond funding day care and could include subsidies for parents who stay at home.

A study released Monday by Statistics Canada shows more Canadians are relying on child care arrangements.

It shows 53 per cent of children from six months to five years were in day care in 2001. That's up from 42 per cent in 1995.

The proportion of children who were looked after in their own home by a relative nearly doubled.

- reprinted from CBC News

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