

# Sask. NDP promises to add 10,000 child care spaces by 2015 <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

The Saskatchewan NDP has announced a plan to create 10,000 spaces of "affordable, accessible child care" over the next four years.

Party Leader Dwain Lingenfelter made the announcement Tuesday morning at a daycare centre in Yorkton, saying, "We must ensure our kids are getting the best possible learning experience in the best possible child care."

He said the plan would include a cap on fees at \$12 a day for school-age children and \$22 for infants and toddlers, with the balance of the cost picked up by the provincial treasury.

The plan also calls for an online registry helping parents to find licensed care, expanded training of child care providers and, for mothers and fathers who act as primary caregivers at home, there would be a fully refundable tax credit of up to \$1,000.

A party statement added "the NDP supports the choices of parents to provide the type of child care that best fits their needs as a family."

The NDP says the entire package would cost just over \$200 million over four years - \$171 million over four years to cap the fees, \$6.7 million for the tax credit and \$42 million to build or create the new spaces.

But Lingenfelter added it would benefit the economy by freeing up parents to train for, and take, jobs - what he called a "an investment with a tremendous return to our economy and our society."

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"What we plan to do is spread the wealth more evenly so that every child has an equal chance of getting a good education, a good start to life."

The NDP says the need for spaces is so great that only about 10 per cent of Saskatchewan children have access to licensed care, with Lingenfelter saying the province is "far behind the national average" for access to child care, per-capita.

So critical is the shortage that the NDP, if elected, would add the 10,000 new spaces in its first term of government.

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He contrasted Saskatchewan unfavourably with Manitoba, claiming that it has 27,000 childcare spaces compared with only 11,000 in this province.

"But this is a big start and we think families will appreciate this platform announcement."

The Saskatchewan Party fired back, saying it has created 3,435 new spaces since forming government in 2007, with a total of 12,740 spaces in the province, slightly higher than the NDP's figure. The Sask. Party also claimed the NDP created only 1,450 new spaces over its 16 years in government from 1991-2007.

The NDP announcement also pledged to "work with families, childcare providers, and other professionals to develop a long-term childcare strategy."

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The child care benefits would not be "income-tested", but could be taxed back from high-income young families through the income tax system, Lingenfelter said. For families already getting child care subsidies, the cut-off level "will be adjusted," he said.

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-reprinted from The Star Phoenix

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

**Tags:** election <sup>[3]</sup>

spaces <sup>[4]</sup>

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