

# Saskatchewan to get 500 new child-care spaces <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Leader-Post staff

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## EXCERPTS:

A total of 537 new child-care spaces in 15 communities have been authorized by the Saskatchewan government. In announcing the additional spaces - which were mentioned in March's provincial budget - on Friday, the government said this brings the number of licensed child-care spaces in the province to more than 13,700, and noted it had brought 4,435 additional spaces into existence since 2007.

That, it says, is a 48-per-cent increase over the number existing when it took office.

In Regina and area, the announcement provides for 33 spaces in the expanded Kids First Day Care Centre.

Elsewhere in southern Saskatchewan, it provides for 39 spaces in a centre at the Weyburn Comprehensive School, 45 in the Family Resource Centre in Swift Current, 25 in Cabri, 20 in Nokomis and 25 at a second site of the Sunshine Learning Centre in Fort Qu'Appelle.

Also getting child-care spaces are La Ronge, Martensville, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Macklin, Paradise Hill, Outlook, St. Louis and Humboldt.

Among child-care specialists, the response was the same: good - but more is needed.

"Child care is in great demand and the need for it is quite drastic for most parents, whether they be returning to the workforce after mat leave or coming into the province or even relocating within the province," said Erin Mack, director of child care at the Regina YWCA.

Its three facilities have a total of 222 seats for children, but a waiting list of close to 700 families.

"We can always use more, but 500 will definitely help."

Reginan Monica Lysack, former executive director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and a nationally quoted expert in the field, added that, "while the addition of more child care spaces is always welcome, there is no overall plan that addresses the many other challenges.

"Saskatchewan still has the lowest coverage (the lowest number of spaces per capita) of all of the provinces. While the current government can be commended for at least keeping up with the growth in other provinces, the reality is that even if we doubled the number of spaces, we would still have among the lowest coverage," said Lysack, who noted that in addition to licensed child care centres, there is a huge pool of unlicensed homes and centres of varying quality and safety.

Despite a healthy economy, "young families are faced with crippling housing prices, student debt repayment, as well as the high cost of child care," she wrote in an email to The Leader-Post. "Today's announcement does nothing to address the staggering cost of child care; the antiquated subsidy rates are the worst in the country, making affordability an insurmountable barrier for both low and middle-income families."

Lysack said the subsidy policy - which is linked to family income - is so outdated that "you have people who are well within the low end of the socioeconomic spectrum who still don't qualify."

In addition to supporting families, Mack and Lysack agreed there's another factor at work. Strengthening child care would strengthen the overall economy because it would let more people join or rejoin the workforce. That's a critical factor in an economy like Saskatchewan, where some jobs go unfilled because of a lack of candidates, said Lysack, who said the Canadian Chamber of Commerce has passed a resolution urging better child care.

-reprinted from the Leader-Post

**Related link:** Provincial government allocates five hundred new child care spaces across Saskatchewan <sup>[2]</sup>

**Region:** Saskatchewan <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** spaces <sup>[4]</sup>

<http://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/05/provincial-government-allocates-five-hundred-new-child-care-spaces-a> [3]  
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