

# Labour groups lobby Alberta government for child-care program

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## EXCERPTS

Labour groups are lobbying Alberta's NDP government to start moving toward universal early childhood education and child care.

The Alberta Federation of Labour says there are not enough child-care spaces in the province, fees are too high for many families and existing subsidies and tax credits are inadequate.

The federation says studies show children with access to early services before they enter kindergarten do better in school, live healthier lives and would be at a lower risk of trouble with the law.

"All children deserve a fair start in life, and investing in early childhood education and care is one of the best ways to achieve this goal," Siobhan Vipond, a federation spokeswoman, said Tuesday.

Labour activists want the NDP to work on three areas to set the stage for a system that would be fully regulated and funded by the government.

Vipond said child-care centres should be included in plans for any new or renovated government buildings.

The government is also being urged to conduct a full public review of the existing child-care network and reinstate an early childhood research program.

Government officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

Everyone understands that the government is under a financial crunch now, but there is no reason why initial steps can't be taken this year, Vipond said.

"Our goal is to change the system and have a universal system which would be publicly funded. We know that in this economic reality this isn't happening tomorrow.

To kick off its Fair Start For Kids campaign the federation launched a petition drive Tuesday and met with members of the legislature from the main political parties.

The petition says child care in Alberta is currently delivered in an inconsistent hodgepodge that leaves many children behind.

Vipond said the federation has asked to meet with Education Minister Dave Eggen, Human Services Minister Irfan Sabir and Health Minister Sarah Hoffman.

Government officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

The Alberta Federation of Labour represents 29 public and private sector unions.

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**Region:** Alberta [3]

**Tags:** labour market [4]

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