

Implementation Committee Progress Report on the *Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*



December, 2022

Funded by the Government of
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Canada

Saskatchewan

Implementation Committee

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This progress report fulfills the requirement identified in section 6.0 of the *Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*: “in December 2022, report to the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan on progress towards Canada and Saskatchewan’s shared goals to date and for the remaining term of the Agreement.”

1. Introduction

- On August 13, 2021, the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan signed an agreement of close to \$1.1 billion over five years to reduce regulated child care fees to \$10-a-day, on average, for children under the age of six by 2025-2026.
- As part of the 2021-2022 to 2025-2026 *Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*, an officials-level Implementation Committee has been established to monitor progress, in consultation with stakeholders, towards achieving key commitments and implementation of new initiatives.
- As an initial affordability target, average parent fees for regulated early learning and child care in Saskatchewan were reduced by an average of 50 per cent retroactive to July 1, 2021, and then further reduced by an average of 70 per cent as of September 1, 2022; exceeding the target set out in *Saskatchewan’s Canada-Wide Action Plan for 2021-2022 to 2022-2023*.
- This report provides information to the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan on progress made to date towards shared goals, with a particular focus on early actions to improve affordability of early learning and child care for families.

2. Progress to Date on Canada-Wide Goals

Saskatchewan is making considerable progress in implementing the *Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*. In 2021-22 and 2022-23, a wide range of investments have been made to support achievement of the affordability, access, quality, and inclusion targets.

Affordability

As steps towards achieving the province's commitment to reach an average of \$10 per day for children under the age of six by March 2026, Saskatchewan reduced parent fees, on average, by 50 per cent effective July 1, 2021. This was announced in November 2021, and achieved through grants to regulated child care centres and homes as well as reimbursements to parents.

A further reduction was implemented effective September 1, 2022, through increased grant payments to regulated child care facilities to reduce parent fees by 70 per cent, on average. It is expected that parents of approximately 16,000 children under the age of six will benefit from this reduction.

Parent fees vary by facility. Effective December 1, 2022, the average full-time monthly fees for regulated facilities are as noted below:

- Centres – Infant \$301, Toddler \$263, and Preschool \$251
- Homes – Infant \$316, Toddler \$296, and Preschool \$279

Average Full-time Monthly Fees for Regulated Centres and Homes					
		March 31, 2020	March 31, 2021	March 31, 2022	December 1, 2022
Centres	Infant	\$778	\$790	\$414	\$301
	Toddler	\$656	\$666	\$351	\$263
	Preschool	\$603	\$612	\$327	\$251
Homes	Infant	\$779	\$786	\$434	\$316
	Toddler	\$727	\$735	\$405	\$296
	Preschool	\$661	\$667	\$371	\$279

The estimated annual cost savings per child is currently between \$4,224 and \$5,724.

Average Full-Time Annual Fees for Regulated Centres and Homes and Annual Savings Per Child				
		March 31, 2020*	December 1, 2022*	Annual Savings
Centres	Infant	\$9,336	\$3,612	\$5,724
	Toddler	\$7,872	\$3,156	\$4,716
	Preschool	\$7,236	\$3,012	\$4,224
Homes	Infant	\$9,384	\$3,792	\$5,556
	Toddler	\$8,724	\$3,552	\$5,172
	Preschool	\$7,932	\$3,348	\$4,548

*Average full-time monthly fees multiplied by 12 months.

Saskatchewan is currently conducting a funding model review to ensure child care homes and child care centres remain viable in the delivery of early learning and child care services.

Affordability News Releases:

- Saskatchewan announces 50 per cent parent fee reduction
[The Governments Of Canada And Saskatchewan Are Making Life More Affordable For Families Through Reduced Child Care Fees | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- Saskatchewan announces 70 per cent parent fee reduction
[70 per cent child care fee reductions](#)

Access

In 2021-22, Saskatchewan allocated 1,803 new child care centre spaces and 409 family child care home spaces to 41 urban and rural communities for a total of 2,212 regulated child care spaces towards the province's commitment to add 28,000 spaces.

Funding for an additional 2,197 child care centre spaces has been provided in 2022-23. Of these new spaces, 1,599 new child care centre spaces have been allocated to date in 2022-23, in 31 urban and rural communities. In addition, 826 family child care home spaces have opened from April to November 2022.

Increased space development capital funding is being provided to new child care centre spaces allocated in 2021-22 and 2022-23, for a total amount of \$10,000 per space from \$8,000, to assist with the rising costs of constructing or renovating physical space. Saskatchewan has also doubled the funding provided, from \$1,200 to \$2,400, to new family child care homes and group family child care homes to assist with the costs of meeting fire, health and safety requirements as part of the initial regulating process.

- As Saskatchewan works to develop a regulated child care space expansion and strategy plan, a campaign to highlight the benefits and rewards of becoming a regulated family child care home was launched in November 2022. Within the campaign, a parent and a provider talked about their experience of regulated child care in the province.

Access News Releases:

- Saskatchewan announces 601 new regulated spaces
[Growing Access To Child Care As 601 New Regulated Spaces Allocated Across Saskatchewan | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- Saskatchewan announces 1,202 new child care spaces
[1,202 New Child Care Spaces Coming To 21 Saskatchewan Communities | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- Saskatchewan announces 2,197 new child care spaces
[Over 2,000 More Regulated Child Care Spaces to Open in Saskatchewan | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)

Public Awareness Campaign News Releases:

- Public Awareness Campaign launched
[Public Awareness Campaign to Encourage More Regulated Child Care Homes in Saskatchewan | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- Saskatchewan announces public awareness campaign
[Public Awareness Campaign to Encourage More Regulated Child Care Homes in Saskatchewan | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- Family Child Care Homes Landing Page
[Government of Saskatchewan - Family Child Care Homes Landing Page](#)
- Parent testimonial
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtLFyLzCmW8>
- Provider testimonial
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNcREvqAFns&t=4s>

Quality

Much of the work to enhance and advance quality since signing the *Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*, has been funded under the *2017-2021 Canada-Saskatchewan Bilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement Workforce Annex*. While funded under an alternate agreement, the investments made increased certification levels and skills of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and supported the advancement of the priorities under the *Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*.

To increase the supply of ECEs, free training opportunities were provided in 2021-22 and are continuing in 2022-23. To date, the development and delivery of training opportunities has expanded and includes, but is not limited to:

- Early Childhood Education training, delivered in both French and English, to support attainment of Certification as an ECE I, ECE II or ECE III;
- ECE Leadership Skills Certificate of Achievement;
- Autism Certificate of Achievement delivered in both French and English; and,
- Micro-credential or other professional learning opportunities.

In October 2022, funding was announced to support child care facilities to adapt to changes emerging from the *Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*. Grant money could be used to learn new computer skills, upgrade computer software or hardware, or acquire training in administration, among other possibilities.

Improving wages is a key item in the recruitment and retention of certified ECEs. Wage enhancements of up to \$3 per hour and workforce enhancements for ECEs was provided in 2021-22. In 2022-23, an additional wage enhancement of up to \$2 per hour was provided for ECEs, for a total of up to \$5 per hour, as well as workforce enhancement funding that was expanded to include staff in regulated group family child care homes.

Saskatchewan is also providing funding to new regulated child care centres and family child care homes that enables the purchase of equipment and resources to enhance their early learning environments and support active play both indoors and outdoors. Saskatchewan is also working to develop a longer-term vision for the ECE workforce, including a provincial wage grid and a recruitment and retention plan.

Quality News Releases:

- Saskatchewan announces post-secondary institute ECE training
[Nearly \\$5 Million In Partnerships With Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Institutions Announced To Add More Early Childhood Education Training | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- Saskatchewan announces free ECE training
[Government Of Saskatchewan Offers Free Training for Early Childhood Educators | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- Saskatchewan announces change management grant
[Regulated Child Care Facilities In Saskatchewan Will Benefit From New Change Management Grant | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- Saskatchewan announces ECE wage increase
[The Governments of Canada And Saskatchewan Announce Wage Increase For Early Childhood Educators | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- Saskatchewan announces workforce enhancement grants
[Regulated Child Care Centres To Receive Workforce Enhancement Grants | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- Saskatchewan announces wage increases for ECEs
[Government Invests \\$5.4 Million For Increased Wages For Early Childhood Educators | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)

Inclusion

The investments for inclusivity build upon provincial initiatives and support the Early Years Plan, Saskatchewan's Disability and the Poverty Reduction Strategies. They will allow the province to build an early learning and child care system that is responsive to the unique needs of all Saskatchewan children and families taking into consideration culture, identity, language and individual needs.

Inclusivity actions for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children are guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, agreements the Government of Canada has established with First Nations, Métis for Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care, the *Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework and Inspiring Success: First Nations and Métis PreK-12 Education Policy Framework*.

Saskatchewan has created child care supports and opportunities for vulnerable and medically fragile children resulting in:

- Supported child care coordinators in five communities that have worked with 448 families and successfully placed 14 children into regulated child care;
- Hired four developmental consultants, working in two locations to support children with disabilities, that have provided additional training to ECEs working with 168 children;
- Outcomes are beginning to be reported demonstrating increased attitude, knowledge and skills. In both locations, centres developed inclusionary Christmas concerts that incorporate children who in previous years have been excluded. In addition, upon completion of working with developmental consultants, one centre has filled their last three vacant spaces with children with inclusionary needs. Staff developed program plans for each child and reached out to the developmental consultant for feedback on additions to the plans; and,
- Funding provided to support the costs of three Licensed Practical Nurses working in two locations supporting 16 medically fragile children to access child care from March to September 2022.

Through the *Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*, Saskatchewan has also invested in the following initiatives:

- funding to child care centres for additional staff that care for children with particularly challenging physical and behavioral needs;
- developing a plan with First Nations and Métis organizations for a coordinated system; and,
- facilitating parental choice and flexible child care options.

Inclusion News Release:

- Saskatchewan announces Inclusion grants for families with vulnerable children [Funding Boost For Child Care Inclusion Grant Will Benefit Families With Vulnerable Children And Children Living with a Disability | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan](#)

3. Achieving Affordability Targets – Programs and Initiatives Supported

Program/ Initiative	Planned Investments	Actual Investments	Target	Results to date
50 per cent Parent Fee Reduction	2021-22 \$93.558M	\$32.242M	Fee reduction by an average of 50 per cent by December 2022 for all children aged 0-5 years	Implemented effective July 1, 2021 Average monthly fee reimbursement to parents for full-time child care spaces was \$303. Reimbursements were issued for approximately 12,000 spaces per month. Estimated 18,500 children were impacted. Estimated average annual savings per child of \$3,915*.
70 per cent Parent Fee Reduction	2022-23 \$51.407M	TBD	Fee reduction by an average of 70 per cent by December 2022 for all children aged 0-5 years	Implemented effective September 1, 2022 Estimated 6,247 child care spaces are at monthly fees of \$200 (or \$10 per day). Estimated 16,000 children were impacted. Estimated average annual savings per child of \$5,481*.

* Actual savings for families will vary

4. Summary of Implementation Committee Key Activities

- Canada and Saskatchewan have created an Implementation Committee to discuss and exchange on progress toward the goals outlined in the *Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*. To date the Committee has met twice – first on June 13, 2022 and again on October 25, 2022.

- Meetings have included approximately 25 partners and stakeholders including Indigenous partners, post secondary institutions offering courses in early childhood education, child care providers (both family child care home providers, and child care centres), representatives from child care centre boards and parent representatives.
- Discussions focused on progress and challenges in four key pillars of the agreement: access, affordability, quality and inclusion. Feedback received noted the positive impacts of increased access to affordable care, increased wages for ECEs and ECE recognition. Partners and stakeholders also noted challenges related to recruitment and retention of the ECE workforce, as well as the cumulative effects that increasingly affordable spaces, greater administrative load and higher demand for more inclusive spaces, is having on the system.

5. Canada-Wide Implementation Challenges to Date

Saskatchewan, along with other provinces, are experiencing challenges in recruitment and retention of qualified ECEs. This challenge increases with the expansion of child care spaces across the province and across Canada and has been highlighted as one of the top challenges by the sector. To alleviate recruitment and retention, Saskatchewan has supported the development of various training opportunities, offered tuition-free early childhood educator training and enhanced ECE wages. Foundational work is currently underway to develop a workforce strategy and an ECE wage grid. It is anticipated that a wage grid and a workforce strategy will be drafted in 2022-23 including an implementation strategy.

Several one-time initiatives have been implemented to positively impact the ECE labour market including, but not limited to, wage enhancements of up to \$5 per hour for ECEs, workforce enhancement grants of \$145 per regulated child care space to assist with each facility's unique workforce needs, tuition free training to increase the qualifications of ECEs and funding to operators to enable them to backfill current staff to take additional training. These one-time initiatives were meant to support the labour market while Saskatchewan develops and implements a workforce strategy and wage grid. The workforce strategy will identify and address the issues that are impacting the recruitment and retention of ECEs in Saskatchewan.

Meeting the targeted number of increased spaces is also a challenge and is tied to the recruitment of new child care homes and the amount of time required to develop and operationalize larger child care centres. The province has launched a media campaign that provides information and builds awareness of the benefits of becoming a regulated family child care home provider. The campaign includes testimonials from providers and parents. Documents included on the province's website to become a regulated provider have been reviewed and updated to ensure clarity and ease of access. Other work undertaken also includes the update to the Licensee's Manuals that facilitate the understanding of the requirements for new licensed child care homes and centres, ensuring all material includes

user-friendly language, and centralizing information and grant application on a platform accessible to all providers.

Saskatchewan has aging data systems that do not meet the current and future needs of the early learning and child care sector. Much of the work continues to be manual, and coupled with the current legislative requirements, result in slow processes that limit the ability to advance initiatives in a timely manner. Saskatchewan is in the early stages of developing a new data system to support to ministry and the sector.

6. Next Steps Towards an Average of \$10/Day Child Care

Saskatchewan is committed to making life more affordable for families and achieving \$10 per day child care fees. To meet this target and ensure a sustainable high-quality child care system, the province is doing foundational work to review and establish several key items including an expansion strategy, workforce strategy, wage grid and a funding model. Each item is interlinked and is key to the success of the new system. This policy work will take several months to complete and will include consultation and stakeholder engagement.

Work has also begun to review the current data system and development of a future state that will meet the needs of the ministry, parents and providers. As an interim solution, Saskatchewan developed an Enrolment Portal for regulated providers to provide enrolment and other information that would reduce effort for providers and the ministry in processing parent fee reduction grants while a long-term solution is developed.

The Ministry of Education will continue to work with the Federal Secretariat on Early Learning and Child Care to ensure investments made through this agreement are focused on Saskatchewan centred approaches that meet the needs of our citizens and families.