

Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Saskatchewan

| Saskatchewan At-a-Glance | |
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| Spaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 13.7% of children 0-5 (2016)²⁶ Kindergarten is non-compulsory and available for a range of ages, including for vulnerable 3- and 4-year-olds |
| Fees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median full-time monthly fees in Saskatoon (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant: \$900 Toddlers: \$790 Preschool: \$710 |
| Auspice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2% of regulated child care is for-profit (2016) Only not-for-profit centres are eligible for public funding of any kind, including fee subsidies |
| Wages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$14.92 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$22.14 (2012) |
| Provincial Allocations (2015-2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$64,488,160 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$14,292,355 One-time funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development funding (various start-up and capital grants) \$812,852 Capital \$0 Enriched Learning Environment Grants \$66,666 Equipment – family child care homes \$171,104 Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Childhood Services Grants \$40,215,830 Teen Student Child Care Centre Support \$2,632,260 Nutrition – family child care homes \$897,873 Inclusion grants \$5,399,220 Other \$934,572 Early Childhood Training \$931,288 |

²⁶ All provinces/territories also provide regulated home child care but an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) in Saskatchewan to cover 8.4% of children aged 0-12.

Recent Initiatives in Saskatchewan

The province's *Early Years Plan* was released in 2016, and guides the province's ELCC strategy into 2020. This plan resulted from extensive consultation that began in the fall of 2014. The *Early Years Plan* was also informed by the *Education Sector Strategic Plan*, the *Saskatchewan Disability Strategy*, the *Mental Health and Addictions Plan*, and the *Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction Strategy* (Government of Saskatchewan, 2016).

The *Early Years Plan* has five pillars:

1. Healthy Beginnings
2. Early Learning
3. Child Care
4. Strong Families, Healthy Children
5. Community Planning and Alignment

There are a number of goals and objectives relating to ELCC in each of these priorities:

- Early Learning: educating parents on choosing quality early learning programs for their child; increasing availability of early learning opportunities; supporting early learning environments to be culturally inclusive; enhancing quality by encouraging programs to use a play-based approach; and enhancing opportunities for training and qualifications of workers.
- Child Care: making it easier for parents to find local child care and early learning programs; supporting parent knowledge and choice, including enhancing access; developing innovative child care partnerships with schools; and strengthening the child care sector.
- Strong Families, Healthy Children: supporting children who are unique learners or experiencing disability.
- Community Planning and Alignment: providing information to families about the importance of early years and services available to them; supporting smoother transitions; improving access to services for vulnerable children; and planning programs and services to meet the needs of children and families based on data and research.

As the Action Plan indicates, these priorities align with the parameters of how federal funding is to be used. Using the funds available under the BA, Saskatchewan will invest in four priority areas: (1) inclusivity of children experiencing disabilities; (2) minority language inclusion of Francophone children; (3) increased access to programs for families; and (4) quality-focused initiatives.

SASKATCHEWAN'S ACTION PLAN

| | Year 1: | Year 2: | Year 3: | Total: |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Federal transfers | \$13,848,167 | \$13,837,957 | \$13,837,957 | \$41,524,081 |

Availability

- **In years 1-3, \$6.71 million/\$6.65 million/\$6.65 million** to create 2,515 new child care spaces in the province by 2020. This will increase access to regulated child care to 20% of children aged 5 and under:
 - 950 new licensed centre spaces, beginning with providing capital costs for 750 new spaces in 2017/2018 and another 200 in 2018/2019. The province will use a data-informed approach to allocate new spaces. The province will also consider how it might implement flexible child care arrangements.
 - 65 Francophone spaces (see below).
 - 1,500 new licensed group and family child care home spaces (500 per year), supported through a 50% increase to nutrition and equipment grants.
 - Due to the significant expansion of licensed child care that federal investments represent, the province will focus on making the licensing system more efficient by implementing a new licensing and monitoring system and hiring additional staff to support monitoring. This will also allow the province to collect data related to quality and develop a reporting measure related to innovation.

Affordability

- Nothing specific about subsidies, but the expansion of licensed child care spaces will make subsidized spaces more accessible to families.

Working Conditions

- Staff training is identified as a priority, and although the amount targeted to training is not specified, it will come out of the **\$4.663 million/\$1.645 million/\$1.810 million in years 1-3** that is earmarked for quality improvements (other initiatives to come out of this amount are described below in “Other”). Staff training initiatives include:
 - Education and training that allows staff to meet the needs of children experiencing disability.
 - Train directors in human resource management so they can communicate and model effective practices with staff and support the hallmarks of quality training (this will address problems with recruitment and retention).
 - Provide training to staff as part of the adoption of the *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide*.

Auspice

- In Saskatchewan, for-profits are not eligible to receive any kind of public funding.

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity

- **In years 1-3, \$1.99 million/\$5.27 million/\$5.105 million** to pilot preschool opportunities for children experiencing disability (Saskatchewan Citizen Consultation Team, 2014):
 - Funding for inclusion supports in rural and remote communities.
 - Introducing the Early Learning Intensive Support Pilot in Regina and Saskatoon, which will be available to children with intensive needs who require a significant level of support to participate in early learning programs (specifically, Prekindergarten programs).
 - Contracting with community-based organizations to provide coordination and supports to Regina and Saskatoon to assist in customizing supports for children and families based on individual needs.
- **In years 1-3, \$0.485 million/\$0.273 million/\$0.273 million** to expand Francophone early learning and child care:
 - Develop 65 licensed child care spaces in Francophone schools (representing a 23% increase).
 - Build curriculum and foundational documents in French language.

Other

- As part of the investments in quality improvement (see above, under Working Conditions), the province will:
 - Support and sustain the growth of the licensed child care sector by highlighting opportunities for residents to enter into the field, with a specific focus on new licensed family child care home providers.
 - Support parent understanding of what to look for in quality care and make it easier for parents to find ELCC programs.
 - Provide a one-time grant for licensed facilities (centres and homes) to purchase equipment and resources to implement the *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide*.
 - Provide a one-time grant to support active play, based on the *Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years*.
 - Provide literacy supports for children with limited access to early learning programs.

What is innovative about the Saskatchewan Action Plan?

The province identifies two of its initiatives as innovative: the pilot programs to support children experiencing disability and a new monitoring system that makes child care licensing more efficient and effective. The former is innovative because it focuses on coordination and supports among different community groups and providers (eg. schools and child care centres), helping to “break down silos” between the different programs that support early learning.

The latter is innovative because the province currently uses a “generalized approach” to child care licensing. However, the province will introduce a new “risk-based approach,” which aligns with quality concerns. This will allow for greater focus on centres that struggle with compliance, working to improve quality in those spaces.



Following the signing of the Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care in 2017, the federal government reached a bilateral agreement with each province and territory, and an asymmetrical agreement with Quebec. For more information about these agreements, go to

timeforchildcare.ca

