



2025 Report V2: Better Analysis Required to Support Child Care Spaces in Areas Where Needed Most

Sustainable child care funding model and improved data tracking and analysis will help achieve accessible child care

REGINA—December 9, 2025: In her **2025 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 10**, Provincial Auditor Tara Clemett audited the Ministry of Education's processes to achieve the accessibility outcome of the *Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement* with the Federal Government, which aims to provide families with high-quality, affordable, accessible, and inclusive child care for children under age six. She made **four recommendations**.

Under the Agreement, Saskatchewan needs to reach a 59% child care coverage rate target by March 31, 2026, or about 46,000 total licensed child care spaces. As of March 2025, the coverage rate was 49% province wide. The Ministry's reported total of 41,163 spaces includes 7,635 still under development, which may not all materialize, thereby increasing the risk the Ministry does not meet its target by March 2026.

The Ministry needs better data tracking and analysis to guide decisions on allocating child care spaces and managing early childhood educator supply. The Ministry has not consulted with post-secondary institutions to ensure enough students are enrolled in early childhood educator training. It also does not track the extent of approved spaces being utilized. We found 694 new spaces underutilized, suggesting spaces may be approved in areas with low demand or with insufficient qualified educators available. More robust collection and analysis of key data would help determine whether child care is truly accessible across Saskatchewan and whether the Ministry is meeting the intent of the Agreement.

We found the Ministry also needs an ongoing, sustainable funding model for the provision of licensed child care in Saskatchewan. Without adequate and reliable funding, providers may change quality of care, have to seek cost savings, or close, thereby limiting child care access.

- 1,204 licensed child care providers (centres and home-based) in Saskatchewan at June 2025
- Between April 2021 and March 2025, the Ministry received \$738.3 million in federal funding, with \$23.3 million remaining unspent as of March 31, 2025
- At December 2024, the Ministry estimated 1,330 more early childhood educators needed by March 2026 to staff approved spaces
- Approximately 23,500 operational spaces added province wide as of March 2025 (target: 28,000 by March 2026)
- Lower fees introduced as part of the affordability provisions of the Agreement caused a significant surge in demand for child care that exceeded spaces available
- As of November 2025, the Provincial and Federal Governments have extended the Child Care Agreement for another five years, starting in 2026–27

We found that while the Ministry reports progress to senior management, the Federal Government, and the public, it does not track and report all key child care accessibility information required under the Agreement. For example, the Ministry does not report coverage rates or unmet demand, nor does it track a breakdown of net new spaces by age group of children at home-based providers. These gaps reduce the Ministry's ability to demonstrate progress toward agreed outcomes. While the Ministry has some information on unmet demand, it does not obtain and analyze waitlist data from child care providers to better understand unmet demand, which risks it approving new spaces in areas of the province that may not have the greatest need.

"Continued collaboration between the Ministry, child care providers, and the Federal Government will be key to finalizing a sustainable funding model and strengthening data analysis to ensure accessible child care spaces are sufficiently created around the province," said Tara Clemett.

The full Provincial Auditor's **2025 Report – Volume 2** available online at auditor.sk.ca.

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