

Performance Audit of the Ministry of Education: Achieving Accessible Child Care

Why It Matters



In 2021, the Ministry of Education entered into 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.

Expanding access to licensed, quality child care strengthens families and communities by helping increase participation in the workforce to attain greater economic security.

Why We Did This Audit

Under the Agreement with the Federal Government, the Ministry committed to increase the number of child care spaces to about 46,000 by March 31, 2026.

The Ministry's reported total of 41,163 spaces by March 2025 includes 7,635 still under development, which may not all materialize, thereby increasing the risk it does not meet its target by March 2026.

What We Found



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.

Key Facts and Figures

- 1,204 licensed child care providers (centres and home-based) in Saskatchewan at June 2025
- 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 Agreement for another five years, starting in 2026–27

We Made Four Recommendations

The Ministry of Education needs to:

- Develop an ongoing, sustainable funding model for the provision of licensed child care in Saskatchewan
- Analyze key data such as waitlists or the number of early childhood educators required to staff new child care spaces to make sure child care is accessible across Saskatchewan
- Track and report all key child care accessibility information required (e.g., unmet demand, coverage rate, spaces available by age of child at home-based providers) under the Agreement

