

Mike Smyth: Report into \$10 child care challenges Liberal arguments ^[1]

Author: Smyth, Mike

Source: The Province

Format: Article

Publication Date: 16 Jan 2017

AVAILABILITY

[Read online](#) ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Listening to Stephanie Cadieux talk about the B.C. government's record on child care, you'd think working parents should have little trouble finding a decent, affordable place for their kids.

The government spends more than \$300 million a year on child care, the minister for children and families points out. Low-income parents get \$120 million in support, helping 20,000 B.C. children, she adds.

An early childhood tax benefit has assisted 180,000 families and the government has spent \$26 million on a capital plan that has seen 4,300 child-care spaces built.

And then there's the government's online child-care finder, which allows parents to check availability in their neighbourhoods by clicking on an interactive map on the ministry's website.

"People are pretty satisfied," the minister said.

Except they're not, at least according to child-care advocates and the thousands of frustrated parents out there who say it's nearly impossible to find high-quality, affordable care for their kids.

Child-care availability varies by region, according to the government's own numbers. The problem for the governing Liberal party is the biggest challenges are in fast-growing cities such as Surrey, where there are lots of electoral ridings and lots of voters.

That's why the NDP's promise to deliver government-subsidized child care that would cost parents just \$10 a day looms as a significant issue in the May election.

Premier Christy Clark's Liberals argue the NDP's plan is simply too expensive and would drive the province's balanced budget back into deficit.

"That would reduce our credit rating and increase the interest rate we pay on our long-term debt," Cadieux argues. "It would mean there would be less money to spend on social programs — the opposite of what child-care advocates want."

It's an argument sure to resonate with the Liberals' base of supporters (including people who don't have young kids and aren't interested in seeing their tax dollars used to pay the child-care expenses of those who do).

Now, though, comes a new economic analysis that turns the Liberals' argument on its head.

The report commissioned by Early Childhood Educators of B.C. predicts \$10-a-day child care would, by the year 2030, boost the province's GDP by \$5.8 billion, create 68,900 jobs and boost net revenue to government by \$184 million.

How would the government actually make money on the deal? Because tax revenue would increase from the thousands of parents now able to work, plus the thousands more workers employed in an expanded child-care system, the report argues. Fewer parents on welfare would reduce another drain on government, the report says.

The child-care-would-pay-for-itself argument has been made by advocates many times, though Cadieux rejects it.

"Quebec is the only jurisdiction that tried something similar and it was unaffordable," she said, referring to Quebec's decision to go from a universal \$7-a-day system to a sliding-scale model in which parents pay more based on their income.

She also disputes that a \$10-a-day system would cost the government \$1.5 billion to operate.

"It could be much more and would require tax increases on the middle class and business," she said.

Watch for the Liberals to keep raising the spectre of tax increases as they slam the NDP's child-care idea as unaffordable. At the same time, watch for the government to promise increased child-care spending of its own as a way to inoculate the Liberals against attacks on the campaign trail.

But I still think this is a good issue for NDP leader John Horgan to take to B.C. voters in May. It clearly differentiates the New Democrats from Christy Clark's Liberals. And it addresses a real pressure felt by thousands of B.C. families.

-reprinted from The Province

Region: British Columbia ^[3]

Tags: access ^[4]

cost ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/17/01/mike-smyth-report-10-child-care-challenges-liberal-arguments-0>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/17/01/mike-smyth-report-10-child-care-challenges-liberal-arguments-0> [2]

<https://theprovince.com/opinion/columnists/mike-smyth-report-into-10-child-care-challenges-liberal-arguments> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/access> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/cost>