

New Democrats promise \$15-per-day child care if elected^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The NDP would institute a \$15-per-day daycare system for all Nova Scotia families if the party forms government following the May 30 election, Leader Gary Burrill announced Tuesday.

Burrill said in the first year of an NDP mandate, the party would eliminate child-care fees for families with a net income of less than \$30,000, and create 400 new child-care spaces. Those promises would cost \$19 million and \$5 million, respectively, in the first year.

Beginning in year two, he said the party would work toward creating the \$15-per-day system. When in place, it would mean families pay about \$300 a month for a child who attends daycare five days a week.

Burrill said the median monthly cost for a daycare program in the Halifax area is currently \$825 for toddlers, \$873 for infants and \$781 for preschoolers.

"We know that parents face in Nova Scotia few struggles as widespread and difficult as the struggle to find affordable, quality [child] care for their kids," Burrill said at the announcement in Dartmouth.

He said a lack of affordable child care keeps people, especially mothers, from participating in the labour force and in their communities.

PC Leader Jamie Baillie criticized the NDP's plan.

"I can't help but wonder about the NDP plan to throw so many mountains full of money at these issues without any idea of how to implement it or pay for it and I think Nova Scotians are going to wonder the same thing," he said.

PCs borrowing from Liberal playbook

The PCs don't have their own child-care plan, but are instead using the one proposed by the Liberals that would see \$3.7 million spent to offer pre-primary in 30 new classes across the province.

The numbers and budget would ramp up in future years as the preschool program is rolled out, largely inside schools, and would eventually become available across the province.

By 2020, the Liberals promise universal access for 9,000 four year olds at a cost of \$49 million per year.

Liberal Leader Stephen McNeil said the NDP's plan wouldn't allow for universal daycare, unlike his party's pre-primary plan.

"We believe ... that every child, regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances, have the same opportunity and go through the same preparation for public education," he said.

Baillie said the PCs would work with daycare providers to ensure affordable daycare was available for young Nova Scotian families.

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