

BC Liberals announce daycare policy to create 60,000 new child-care spaces ^[1]

Author: Bailey, Ian

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EXCERPTS

On the eve of a Throne Speech expected to set the stage for their defeat in a confidence vote, the BC Liberal government has announced a \$1-billion shift in their daycare policy, proposing the creation of 60,000 additional spaces over four years.

The daycare proposal is the latest in a series of policy changes and complete reversals compared with the Liberal Party's campaign platform for the May 9 election. The party has also announced major changes in its approach to poverty, campaign-finance reform, social-assistance rates and transit funding. Premier Christy Clark said Thursday's Throne Speech will include plans to amend the budget to pay for a new \$1-billion investment in child care and early childhood education over four years.

The investment will create 60,000 new child-care spaces in addition to 13,000 already promised by the BC Liberals. Ms. Clark also promised a full child-care subsidy for families earning up to \$60,000 a year, and a partial subsidy for all families earning up to \$100,000 a year. The Premier said the larger-than-expected surplus would help pay for the measure.

Ahead of last month's provincial election, which saw voters elect the province's first minority government in six decades, Ms. Clark and the BC Liberals denounced an NDP plan to create \$10-a-day daycare as too expensive.

In another reversal, Ms. Clark promised to launch a poverty-reduction plan for British Columbia.

"We are going to join the rest of the country in tackling [poverty] broadly and we are going to find every way that we possibly can, including creating jobs and investing in education, to make sure that families find their way out of poverty in this incredibly rich province."

Despite previously acknowledging that the government is likely to be ousted on a confidence vote by the combined votes of the NDP and the BC Green Party, Ms. Clark said her government will advance the new agenda.

She also said Liberals would run on this new policy as well as others announced in recent days in the next election, declaring Liberals are responding to messages voters have delivered in the last provincial election.

"The public has said to us, 'You have got our province in great financial shape. Now spend some of that money. Now make sure we are spreading that around in one of the richest societies anywhere in the world. Let's make sure that everybody has an equal chance to get ahead,'" Ms. Clark said.

"They don't want us to be reckless. But they want us to move quicker on child care, on health care, on affordability, on education."

On Wednesday, Ms. Clark revealed the new Liberal approach at the BC Liberal Women's Network Luncheon as part of her most detailed explanation yet for a series of policy reversals that cabinet ministers have outlined in the past week.

Those reversals include a proposed ban on corporate and union political donations, increases on social assistance and scrapping plans for a referendum on spending tools to enable Metro Vancouver to fund transit expansion. Social assistance rates would increase by \$100 a month under the Liberal pledges.

Ms. Clark said the Liberals have heard voters in last month's provincial election, realized they have to adapt the best ideas of the other parties and also that there's a virtue in spending money for public priorities.

Asked if she regretted not running on some of the new ideas, Ms. Clark told a news conference following her speech, "I am looking forward, not backward."

The Liberals have 43 seats in the 87-seat legislature. However, the BC NDP are planning to combine their 41 seats with the votes of the three Green Party MLAs to vote the Liberals out at the first opportunity.

In Victoria, a bemused BC NDP Leader John Horgan told an open session of his caucus that there will effectively be an NDP Throne

Speech delivered in the B.C. capital on Thursday, and called out the government for taking on issues he said they have largely ignored.

Green Party Leader Andrew Weaver said despite supporting some of the new Liberal policies, his party remains intent on joining the NDP to oust the Liberals in a confidence vote.

Here's a look at what the Liberals' election platform said about daycare, what the party is promising now and how that compares with what the NDP campaigned on.

BC Liberal election platform

The Liberals campaigned on implementing a promise included in the February budget to create 13,000 new child-care spaces by 2020. The platform also criticized the NDP's plan for \$10-a-day daycare as unaffordable and said it would subsidize millionaires.

New Liberal plan announced this week

The Liberals are now proposing to spend \$1-billion over four years to create an additional 60,000 child-care spaces on top of the 13,000 promised in the budget, which has not yet passed. The party also says it would provide full subsidies to families earning less than \$60,000 and partial subsidies for families earning up to \$100,000.

NDP election platform

The New Democrats campaigned on a plan to create a \$10-a-day daycare system, which would be fully up and running in 10 years. The plan would be gradually phased in, with \$855-million in new spending over the first three years, focusing first on children under two years old. Eventually, the system would offer full-time care for \$10 a day, part-time care for \$7 and free care to families earning less than \$40,000 a year.

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