

Trudeau also sits down with Lehman ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Justin Trudeau was as much rock star as Canadian prime minister when he visited Barrie Thursday morning.

The PM first had a private sit-down with Mayor Jeff Lehman at Barrie City Hall, then headed to East Bayfield Community Centre after rain washed out a planned visit to Centennial Beach.

Trudeau was met by a throng of people, likely hundreds, along with a few squeals of delight, on his way in and out of the Livingstone Street recreation centre - shaking hands, picking up children and posing for selfies.

Inside, he played with kids - including five-month-old Emma Victoria McDonald - assembled Lego and met families who have benefited from what Trudeau called "a day of celebration", one full year of the new Canada Child Benefit.

"Among others things, I wanted to get a sense of what families here in Barrie, and right across the country, are doing with their new Canada Child Benefit," Trudeau said.

"The CCB was a huge initiative that our government rolled out exactly one year ago today (Thursday). This time last year, parents started receiving bigger, tax-free monthly cheques to help with the high costs of raising their kids.

"We did it because we know how expensive it is to have and raise kids. Healthy food, warm clothing, school supplies, these things aren't cheap. So we decided to do something about it," Trudeau said.

Lehman said the increased CCB is having an impact here.

"Barrie is the metropolitan area in Ontario with the highest proportion of its population under 14, and so places like this (East Bayfield Community Centre), programs that occur in centres like this, and the child benefit are so important to Barrie families," he said.

In its 2016 federal budget, the Liberal government merged the Canada Child Benefit with the Universal Child Care Benefit, which provided \$160 per month for each child under the age of six and \$60 for each child between six and 17 years old, with two other benefits for low- and middle-income families.

The CCB boosts the amount most families end up getting. It's estimated the average family receives almost \$2,300 more under the new system, and that nine out of 10 families are benefitting.

Finance Minister Bill Morneau promised it will lift about 300,000 children out of poverty.

"In the old system, the government sent child benefit cheques to just about everyone, regardless of income," Trudeau said. "Well, we didn't think it was right. Millionaires were getting help while the single parent working three jobs was still struggling.

"The old child benefit system was broken, so we fixed it," he said. "We know how much Canadians have been helped by the program."

The prime minister was in Barrie for a little more than three hours Thursday, leaving just after noon.

He was also greeted by a large crowd in the Barrie City Hall Rotunda as he left for East Bayfield Community Centre.

Trudeau wasn't popular with every Barrie resident, however.

John Wright, 27, stood outside Barrie City Hall with a sign that read 'Trudeau is a traitor'.

"Paying a terrorist \$10 million under the table is one reason (for the sign)," he said, referring to Omar Khadr, 30.

Khadr was paid \$10.5 million and got an apology from Ottawa for violating his rights during a long ordeal after capture by U.S. forces in Afghanistan, in July 2002.

Wright also said Trudeau is part of a politically corrupt culture and doesn't stand up enough for Canada on the international stage.

"He's just a puppet of the EU (European Union)," Wright said of Trudeau. "We need someone who puts Canada first."

-reprinted from The Barrie Examiner

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