

# BC NDP looks to federal government to help fund childcare plan

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## EXCERPTS

B.C. Premier John Horgan says the NDP government's \$10-a-day childcare plan, a central plank from the party's spring election campaign that could eventually cost as much as \$1.5-billion a year, hinges on funding from the federal government.

"If we're going to deliver on our commitments to childcare - affordable, accessible childcare - we're going to need a willing partner at the federal level, and we spent a good deal of our time talking about that," Mr. Horgan told reporters Thursday after a 30-minute meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Mr. Horgan acknowledged the issue of childcare was "critically important" to B.C. voters and said the topic was a focus of his meeting with the Prime Minister.

The party's election platform provided details of how an NDP government would fund early aspects of the daycare plan in the next three years - the cost was projected to be \$400-million by 2019-20 - but did not say how it would pay for the entire thing. The party said it could take a decade for the program to be fully up and running, when it would cost about \$1.5-billion.

It fended off criticism during the campaign that several of its promises, including the daycare program, would be too costly, but the NDP repeatedly insisted it could find the money to pay for them. The New Democrats argued the daycare program would eventually pay for itself, as parents were able to return to work and pay taxes.

There was no mention of the daycare promise in a mid-year September budget, but the government has promised there would be more details in its first full-year budget in February.

Earlier this month, Mr. Horgan said he remain committed to the specific program, declaring at the NDP's first convention since taking power: "It's been 16 weeks and we have a four-year term and we are going to do everything we can to implement the program that we ran on."

Mr. Trudeau did not provide any details about what, if any, support his government was prepared to offer B.C. as it puts together its childcare program. Earlier this year, the federal government pledged \$7.5-billion for childcare over 11 years.

Mr. Trudeau highlighted several issues, including the opioid crisis and protection of the environment as joint priorities.

However, he only referred to childcare in passing as one of a number of files.

In response, Mr. Horgan acknowledged "challenging issues" between Ottawa and B.C., but added, "We tend to focus on the things we can make progress on."

Later, in the afternoon, Mr. Horgan said he had also talked to the Prime Minister about such files as housing, postsecondary education and federal assistance to help with recovery costs from this year's forest fires in B.C.

"I raised a host of issues with him," Mr. Horgan said.

"The Prime Minister recommitted federal participation in the housing sector for the first time in a long, long time. I look forward to that manifesting itself in the coming months."

Asked if he had specific requests for Mr. Trudeau on the varied files, Mr. Horgan replied, "Cash," but did not elaborate on figures.

Mr. Horgan also told the news conference that he felt "obliged" to mention concerns about the planned expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline between the Alberta oil sands and the Lower Mainland. The federal government has approved the project while B.C. has gone to court to fight it.

"We reiterated our position and the Prime Minister acknowledged that and reiterated his position," Mr. Horgan said.

The pair met at the Vancouver Convention Centre after both speaking at an event about a planned Women Deliver international conference on gender equity that will be held in Vancouver in 2019, attracting more than 6,000 delegates, including global leaders, academics and activists.

During his remarks about gender equity and the conference, Mr. Horgan said he hoped to have the "universal, accessible" childcare in place by the 2019 gathering.

-reprinted from The Globe and Mail

**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** child care <sup>[4]</sup>

affordability <sup>[5]</sup>

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