

Wynne blasts Horwath's child-care plan as too vague^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Poking holes in the NDP child-care plan is like taking candy from a baby, charges Liberal Leader Kathleen Wynne.

As the Liberals scramble to try to be the alternative to Doug Ford's poll-leading Progressive Conservatives, Wynne took aim at Andrea Horwath's surging New Democrats.

"The NDP is not ready to take on Doug Ford — that's the bottom line — to keep our economy strong and deliver on the priorities that we hold in common," she said Friday at the Studio 123 daycare at Toronto's 401 Richmond.

"On child care ... the NDP have some ideas that, at first blush, look pretty generous and look like a good idea. The problem is when you scratch below the surface, you realize that the details are not there," the Liberal leader said.

"There are two main problems that I can see with their proposal: first, it doesn't have any detail on how much it will cost middle-class families, and the NDP have not been able to answer that question," she said.

"That is a big gap in the detail that's available."

Horwath has said, if the NDP wins the June 7 election, there would be free child care for families with a household income of less than 40,000 in a licensed daycare centre starting next year.

Fees will be based on income and the New Democrats maintain that about 70 per cent of families would see an average cost of \$12 per day. The wealthiest Ontarians pay the full cost of child care, which can be as much as \$100 a day.

The NDP has also promised to build 202,000 new licensed spots.

In contrast, Wynne's Liberals are building 100,000 new spaces, and, beginning in 2020, child care would be free for all children between the ages of two-and-a-half years and the age of four, at which they enter full-day junior kindergarten.

Wynne said that pledge, a \$2.2-billion cornerstone of the March budget, means a saving of \$17,000 per child for families.

Ford, meanwhile, is touting tax rebates of up to \$6,750 per child on daycare fees, depending on income.

Gordon Cleveland, associate professor of economics emeritus at the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus and the author of a recent government report entitled "Affordable For All: Making Licensed Child Care Affordable in Ontario," said Wynne's plan is the most "realistic."

"I'm not a member of the Ontario Liberal Party. Never have been. I'm not here as a politician, but as an economist who's researched child-care policy for over 30 years and advised governments in various jurisdictions and internationally," said Cleveland.

"Making preschool child care free of charge is the best next step forward in dramatically improving the affordability of child care for families in Ontario."

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