

Furey doubles down on \$25-a-day child care on 2nd day of business ^[1]

New premier says he's focused on adaptable back-to-school plan and economic diversification

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EXCERPTS

In his first full day as premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, Andrew Furey said he is continuing to learn while reiterating some of the promises that won him the Liberal leadership.

When you take on a job like the premiership, Furey said Thursday, there are always some surprises.

"When you get to see what's laid out in front of you by the great public service here, 'surprise' may be a strong word. But there's new intelligence that you have to use to base your decisions moving forward."

Furey said he has already had several meetings since officially taking the title of premier Wednesday, including one Thursday morning on the province's back-to-school plan, announced earlier this week.

The premier said the meeting — which included representatives of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the English school district and the legislature's opposing parties — was focused on figuring out ways to make a more adaptable, dynamic plan so children can return to school safely.

"That's building on evidence and intelligence that had been provided. But of course things are changing, and we need to be able to [be] adaptive with that," he said.

"I'm open to discussions, of course," he added. "I said it, I mean it. [NDP MHA] Jim Dinn was at the meeting this morning, as was [PC MHA] Craig Pardy online. They brought good ideas to the table. We're at a time right now ... where we all gotta be working together, and I'm happy to chat with anyone who brings ideas forward."

\$25-a-day child care an "economic driver," Furey

Furey also doubled down on his promise of \$25-a-day child care in the province, a platform he ran heavily on during his campaign against leadership candidate John Abbott.

Although the province's \$2.1-billion deficit was not known when Furey made his announcement, he says the plan is one he's "fully committed to."

"It's an economic driver. It unlocks economic potential for the province," he said.

"So it may be an investment in the short term, but ... an economic driver in the long term. These are the kind of targeted investments we need to make responsibly now to bear fruit in the future."

N.L. 'important to many Canadians': LeBlanc

Furey, who is also minister of intergovernmental affairs, met with federal Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc on Thursday. At a press conference following the meeting, LeBlanc said the two are focused on strengthening and continuing the relationship between the province and Ottawa.

"In the months and years ahead, this province is important to many Canadians, not only Newfoundlanders and Labradorians."

Both LeBlanc and Furey said they're not looking for a bailout from the federal government but want ideas to help the province in the long term.

Furey pointed to the diversification of sectors such as technology, education and the arts, highlighted by the name change of several provincial departments, as one of those ideas.

"I talked about the technology sector as a pipeline to the future, and learning from our oil and gas experience in the past, where there was

no pipeline of skilled labour and trades before the oil and gas boom," he said. "But we can learn from that now and invest in a technology space.

"But there's no magic bullet here. We need to develop strategies that do diversify the economy for the future, that make a sustainable opportunity to grow and develop families here in the province."

Region: Newfoundland ^[3]

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