

YP childcare plan superior to Liberals': Dixon ^[1]

The Yukon Party (YP) has announced a \$28-million universal childcare benefit as it attempts to out-do the governing Liberal party.

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EXCERPTS

The Yukon Party (YP) has announced a \$28-million universal childcare benefit as it attempts to out-do the governing Liberal party.

At a news conference held this morning, Yukon Party Leader Currie Dixon outlined the details of the program – which would cost \$3 million more than the Liberal offering released in the March 4 territorial budget.

Dixon called the YP program a “truly universal” frame work as compared to the Liberals’ ideas.

Every family in the territory with children 10 years old and younger would qualify for the benefit, regardless of whether they are enrolled in a daycare program.

That’s why Dixon means by “truly universal”. His program isn’t tied to daycare, but instead to children.

The program would be available on a sliding scale. Families with children up to the age of five would qualify for \$500 a month per child.

After that, the benefit would be reduced to \$100 a month.

No funding would be available for children older than 10.

Dixon said the Liberals had projected their universal childcare program to cost \$25 million this year.

The YP would add another \$3 million to that. Dixon said the extra funding could be found within the department.

The Liberal program will kick in April 1, and is based on children enrolled in licensed childcare programs.

Dixon said that leaves many people who don’t qualify, including stay-at-home parents or children in the care of family members, such as grandparents.

He said that’s the key difference in the program the YP is bringing forward.

Dixon also said the Liberal program will create a lot of “red tape” and increased staff and regulatory expenses.

As well, it will create far more paperwork and administration costs for participating daycares.

“Our program is available to all,” he said. “The Liberal plan leaves people behind and provides no choice.”

According to a news release, with the program, the Yukon Party would:

- Create the non-taxable Yukon Universal Child Benefit of \$500 per child per month for each child up to the age of five paid directly to parents to help with the cost of childcare.
- Provide a non-taxable \$100 benefit per child per month directly to parents for each child between the ages of five and 10.

Dixon also rolled some election promises on early childcare education and associated professionals into the announcement.

“To help enhance quality of early childcare education and support childcare operators and educators,” a statement said, a Yukon Party government would:

- Recognize the value of early childcare educators by increasing their wages.
- Create incentives for early childcare educators to enhance their education, their skills and their training.
- Work with the early childcare educators community to review their certification system and explore creating new levels.
- Explore the development of an Early Learning Degree program at Yukon University.
- Develop a teaching lab facility to support the current Early Learning and Childcare program at the university.

- Provide support for much-needed improvements to daycare facilities by enhancing funding for physical space improvements.
- Continue with planned direct operating grant changes and increases.
- Enhance and provide long-term, stable funding to the Yukon Child Development Centre.

“Families are best positioned to decide which childcare options work best for them, and we are focused on ensuring we leave no child behind,” Dixon said.

“As a father of two myself, I have seen the incredible work of early childhood educators and have heard many stories of families struggling with the cost of childcare.

“Our plan aims to improve the affordability and quality of early childhood education and childcare for every single child.”

Region: Yukon Territory ^[3]

Tags: child care benefits ^[4]

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