

Tories slam NDP for \$10/day child-care expansion delay ^[1]

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Source: Free Press

Publication Date: 2 Jul 2024

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Excerpt

Summer vacation is here and \$10/day child care for school-age kids that was promised by the NDP is not, the Progressive Conservatives charged Tuesday.

“The NDP campaigned on a commitment to have this ready for the summer,” MLA Grant Jackson, Tory critic for early childhood learning, said in an interview Tuesday. “We’re into summer and the school year is over and this is not in place. This is a campaign commitment the NDP have failed to meet,” said Jackson.

During last year’s provincial election campaign, the NDP said it recognized child-care costs for school-age children in summer months, on professional development days and holidays during the school year range from \$18 to more than \$20 per day. The April 2 provincial budget included \$2.5 million to extend \$10/day child care to non-school days – including in-service days, spring and summer breaks – for school-age children.

Early Childhood Learning Minister Nello Altomare said in a statement Tuesday the government has confirmed publicly the expansion of \$10/day child care will be implemented once the budget passes later this fall.

The government said in May it was “committed to making life more affordable” and that it knows child care can have a financial impact on Manitoba families. It confirmed \$10/day child care was in the plans and said at the time more information would be shared in the coming weeks. After May 20, when Premier Wab Kinew called the June 18 Tuxedo byelection, the minister’s office said it couldn’t comment on the rollout of reduced fees saying they were prevented from doing so by Election Financing Act communication blackout rules.

Prior to summer, the Manitoba Child Care Association launched a letter-writing campaign to MLAs advocating for a July 1 rollout of the plan, saying families needed to know to make arrangements for this summer.

“Unfortunately, we were informed that it would not take effect until later this year,” Lynda Raible, past-president of the association, said Tuesday. She said the association was informed the plan would not be offered in time for the summer months because of the delayed approval of the budget.

“We have not, to date, received any start date, to my knowledge,” Raible said. “We know summer is at a higher rate than school days and families continue to struggle financially to balance their own budgets.”

Jackson is calling on the minister to implement the \$10/day child care promise by Aug. 1, in time for the last month of summer holidays, “or, at the very least, have it ready to go for school holidays at the beginning of the upcoming school year in September.”

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