

Tories' child-care plan falls flat, poll says [CA]^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The Conservative government's \$1,200 child-care payouts are seen as a nice gesture from Ottawa that will ultimately have little impact, according to the government's own public opinion research.

The Department of Human Resources and Social Development contracted polling firm Ipsos-Reid to conduct 16 focus groups of 10 people each across the country to get feedback on the government's child-care plan, which promises to create 125,000 new spaces in addition to monthly payments of \$100 to parents for each child under the age of 6.

"The government's proposed child-care plan is viewed quite favourably by the majority of focus-group participants," the researchers write in the report.

But the government also heard that child care is so expensive that the money will likely be spent on other things instead.

"The general consensus was that the \$1,200 will not have any real impact on child-care choices and instead will be used to help with the 'next bill' or with costs associated with extracurricular activities," it states, noting there was criticism that the government will collect tax on the payouts.

"Essentially, this is seen as a nice gesture, but one that won't have a big impact."

An official with the department said the government paid \$123,205 for the research.

...

"The allowance is not seen as a national child-care solution. While parents may choose how to spend the allowance, it is not sufficient to have an impact upon parents' choices: No one is going to be in a position to go back to work or stay at home to raise children because of the \$1,200.

"That said, it does not seem that people outside of major urban centres are looking for a national daycare system and, as long as it's not positioned as such, people hold quite positive views of the current proposal."

...

Some political analysts speculated during the past election that the Conservative's child-care plan was aimed at wooing immigrants, who are more leery of institutionalized daycare. However, the focus groups revealed the opposite.

The pollsters found a general consensus among immigrant parents that some time in formalized daycare centres is helpful to children.

"For immigrant parents, early learning can be particularly important given the linguistic and cultural challenges an immigrant child can face when starting kindergarten," it says.

- reprinted from the Globe and Mail

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