

Finley caught in child-care quagmire as new cheques printed for parents [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Social Development Minister Diane Finley faced a pressing question Monday as the first federal cheques were printed for parents of kids under six.

She must now create 125,000 new child-care spaces using a tax incentive plan that has been widely dismissed as unworkable.

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Finley is collecting input across Canada on how best to deliver on a key promise - adding spaces - without giving provinces billions of dollars pledged by the former Liberal government. She has already ruled out that kind of ongoing cash flow, she said in an interview.

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Finley hopes to have recommendations for a space-creation plan by next fall.

Provinces are on their own as of next March 31 when the Conservatives cut off federal funds that were to reach \$5 billion over five years.

Instead, the Tories are offering the family allowances plus \$250 million a year in tax credits or other support to lure employers and non-profit groups to create 25,000 new spaces a year for five years.

Even critics of the Liberal plan say the Conservative approach is badly flawed.

"I think the federal government is in an interesting dilemma," says Kathy Graham, head of the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario, representing 600 private and non-profit members.

"How the federal government is going to create spaces and bypass the provinces is clearly beyond me."

Provinces license and are ultimately responsible for such services, she said.

She says the Conservatives also risk missing a big expansion opportunity by excluding private operators.

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Monica Lysack, executive director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, says she has not yet been contacted by Finley's office.

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Child-care spaces often disappear when they're created with start-up funding but no ongoing support, she said Monday.

- reprinted from the Canadian Press

Region: Canada ^[2]

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