

How will Practical Jack deal with child care? [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

What will Practical Jack Layton do when Stephen Harper moves on his promise to deep-six the Liberal child-care package? Will the New Democratic Party leader and his caucus oppose the Prime Minister? Or will they strike some of kind of deal with him?

Three months ago, it seemed inconceivable that Layton's party could back Harper's plan to eliminate the fledgling national program.

...

But that was before the defection of Liberal David Emerson. Before Emerson joined the Conservative government, the NDP didn't hold the balance of power in the Commons. Only the Bloc Québécois and the Liberals had that potential. The NDP was one seat short of being a kingmaker.

But now all of that has changed.

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Layton prides himself on getting things done. That's what he did on Toronto City Council where he and Chow, his even more practical wife, wheeled and dealt constantly with both ideological friends and foes.

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Layton took that style to Ottawa. He liked to boast that his proudest achievement during the Liberal minority period was getting the then-government to alter its budget in a way that momentarily took into account NDP priorities.

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So, what will the NDP do on child care?

...

Intriguingly, both Layton and Chow appear to have moved away from total opposition to the Conservative plan. Instead, they are focusing on the details.

In particular, they don't like Harper's plan to make his baby bonus taxable. They say this makes it almost valueless.

If Harper were to fix that problem (which he might; he doesn't like taxes), would the NDP support the Conservative child-care-free budget? Under previous leaders, the answer probably would have been no. Licensed child care is considered too close to the bone for most New Democrats.

But with Practical Jack, who knows? He could argue he was getting something done.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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