

Ghiz urges Harper to maintain child care deal signed with P.E.I. [CA-PE] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Opposition Leader Robert Ghiz has written Prime Minister Stephen Harper urging the Conservative leader to maintain a child care deal signed with Prince Edward Island.

Ghiz is also planning to write Premier Pat Binns calling on the P.E.I. premier to take a more aggressive stance with the federal government to preserve the child-care agreement.

"The agreement in principle signed last year is worth more than \$20 million to Prince Edward Island," Ghiz said Tuesday. "That agreement will help to improve and modernize child-care services in our province for years to come."

The Liberal leader said he cannot understand why the premier is not fighting harder, like other premiers, to maintain the deal.

"Unfortunately, Pat Binns and his Conservatives have remained virtually silent on the agreement they signed themselves. I do not understand why there is not a greater level of pressure coming from the Conservatives to maintain that agreement."

In an interview following cabinet Tuesday, Binns said the province would have had to negotiate the remaining four years of the deal anyway.

But the province had an agreement in principle signed with the federal government. That agreement laid out the money the province would receive over the next four years, including the \$2.8 million in 2006-2007 and an additional \$4.9 million for the remaining three years of the five-year agreement.

Binns said the province is in negotiations with Ottawa to strike a deal, one which he hopes will include Harper's plan to provide money directly to parents along with additional money for the provinces to create new child care spaces.

The province puts about \$5 million of its own money in child care annually.

Ghiz said the federal Liberals' child-care deal was widely applauded by Islanders - and particularly appreciated by those in the child-care field.

"I believe that it is vital for the provincial government to fight for its preservation."

Binns plans to meet with child-care providers this week. Binns said he wants to negotiate the best deal possible for Prince Edward Island with Ottawa.

- reprinted from the Charlottetown Guardian

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