

Hamm Tories wait on election before rolling out plan [CA-NS] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The Hamm government is waiting to see how the federal election turns out before moving ahead with some of its child care plans.

The province and Ottawa signed a deal in May. Part of the agreement called for the province to come up with a plan for the money, something the province wanted to have in place by last month.

Community Services Minister David Morse said cabinet colleagues had a couple of minor questions about the plan, and the department will answer those.

"We will be ready to present it to Ottawa when they're in a position to receive it," he said before a cabinet meeting Tuesday.

Ottawa won't be interested in the plan if the Conservatives are in charge after the Jan. 23 election. They plan to scrap the last four years of the agreement in principle.

Mr. Morse said he wants to be sure whatever the federal money is spent on is sustainable.

"One of the cruellest hoaxes that any government can perpetuate on people in need of services is to set up something and then pull the rug out from underneath them a year or 18 months after it's set up," he said.

Federal Social Development Minister Ken Dryden said the first-year money was meant to be used while federal and provincial officials negotiated final details of the last four years.

"What you didn't want to have happen is for those who might benefit to be waiting around for the negotiations to finalize," Mr. Dryden said.

Mr. Morse said his department did a broad consultation in developing its plan. Critics have said he should already know priority areas to direct some of the cash.

- reprinted from the Chronicle-Herald

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