

SpinBusters: Parents analyze parties' child care plans [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

THOMSON: Now that all of the leaders have put their child care agendas on the table, we're taking the political pulse of some parents. Joining us from Vancouver is working mother Necole Anderson. In Calgary, Geoff Vandermolen, a father of two. And in Ottawa, Brian Lesage, who also has two young children. Thanks to all of you for taking part in our SpinBusters segment. Well, let me begin with you, Necole in Vancouver, and just ask you as you go through these different platforms and the most recent one of course is the NDP plan that we were just listening to, \$8.7-billion over four years, what's your reaction to that?

ANDERSON: Well, generally, I have a very positive reaction to that. I think the more money that child care gets and the more quickly that we get that money, the better off we'll be. We are already so far behind other countries in the Western world that we need to get caught up. The other thing I liked about the NDP plan is the fact that they're going to enshrine child care in legislation, which none of the other plans do. And that it's targeted specifically to nonprofit, regulated child care.

THOMSON: Geoff, what do you think? It's \$8.7-billion, but it's over four years, compared to the Tories' five years and the Liberals' 10.

VANDERMOLLEN: Well, I have to say as a parent I certainly like the fact that they're going to prioritize child care. What is unfortunate, I think, in the NDP plan, as I read it, that it's going to a particular kind of child care: licensed, nonprofit child care. You know, who's going to argue with licensing and all the rest? Except for those of us that may be in a part-time solution where those sorts of child care solutions are really hard. When my wife is working part-time and I'm working full-time that becomes a difficult scenario for us to imagine. The full-time licensed child care is not an option for us. So, it really doesn't benefit a certain segment of the population, at least as I see it. It certainly does benefit a large percentage, but not everyone.

THOMSON: Brian, let me get you to weigh in on the NDP plan.

LESAGE: From my perspective, the NDP program on the Quebec model, I have friends over on the Quebec side, and it's nice in theory but in practice that kind of a plan leads to long wait times. And you're basically asked to institutionalize your kids at age one, two and three. Driving in here, I was thinking of all my friends with kids in daycare and not a single one of them has chosen to put their child in that kind of a setting. All my friends and colleagues have chosen to put their kids in private daycare in a home setting. I don't like the idea of creating thousands of institutional spaces for kids.

THOMSON: You know, the Tories were the first ones to come out with their daycare plan in this campaign. They're talking about \$10.9-billion over five years. Let me start again once with you, Necole, in Vancouver.

ANDERSON: The Tory plan, the problem with that that I see is that after five years what do you end up with? You end up with where we are today. And one of the other speakers was talking about institutionalized care. Somehow, when daycare is involved "institution" becomes a bad thing. But we have a school system that's an institution, we have a health-care system that's an institution, and those institutions are not bad things. And child care as an institution will not be a bad thing. And I think what people are missing is that this money can be used to create licensed, regulated care in a variety of settings that accommodate families that work part-time. A lot of the problem now with the availability of child care is that it is such a fragile system and it is so fragmented that the wait lists are tremendous. So, there really isn't choice. Myself, I was on the waiting list for months -- 3 ½ years -- for a 3-year-old's care, for my son.

THOMSON: Necole, Geoff and Brian, thank you. Two for the Tories. And I think if I read you correctly, Necole, you were for the NDP, in favour of at least the beginnings of that platform. Thanks to all of you for taking part.

ANDERSON: Thank you.

VANDERMOLLEN: You're welcome.

LESAGE: Thank you, good morning.

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