

P.E.I. negotiating better child care deal: Gillan [CA-PE] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Health Minister Chester Gillan is denying Opposition accusations that he is dragging his feet when it comes to signing a new deal for child care.

The federal government announced in its last budget that it would be investing money in child care and early childhood education.

To deliver the program, it has signed intergovernmental deals with several provinces, most recently with Nova Scotia during a visit to the province Monday by Prime Minister Paul Martin.

Martin said Monday that he felt the federal government was within reach of a deal with Prince Edward Island.

But Gillan has said there is still a lot of ground to cover before P.E.I. will ink any childcare agreement.

He told Crapaud-Hazel Grove Liberal Carolyn Bertram Wednesday that the problem was simply a lack of money on offer from the federal government.

He said the per capita funding formula proposed by Ottawa does not account for the fact that P.E.I. has a much smaller population than its sister provinces but would face proportionately higher administration and startup costs for a new system.

Gillan said the base funding model would give P.E.I. a top-up of money beyond what would be available on a strict per capita basis.

He said the three territorial governments face similar funding challenges and have also requested base funding for the program.

Bertram said Island families are starting to wonder if they are missing out on support while the province is embroiled in talks.

"This has been discussed for quite some time," she said.

"How long do families and children on P.E.I. have to wait for your deliberations?"

Gillan said there's no harm in negotiating while the Martin government seems to be in a spending mood.

"In the last two to three weeks what have we seen the federal government do but going from province to province to province giving out millions of dollars for projects?" he said. "Mr. Speaker, we're looking for a few crumbs."

- reprinted from the Charlottetown Guardian

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