

Day-care deal done, but ...[CA-NS] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Cabinet has signed off on a multi-million dollar federal child-care deal that could double the number of affordable day-care spaces in Nova Scotia.

But with the Paul Martin government on the brink, the chances of ever seeing that money are growing increasingly dim.

Community Services Minister David Morse said yesterday the province has reached a \$20.4-million, five-year agreement with Ottawa. The money will mean universally accessible and affordable child care, he said.

"My hope is we can not only raise the threshold so that more families can qualify, but that we eliminate the waiting list," said Morse.

"This should about double what we can do in child care."

The big problem, however, is that Ottawa has not signed the deal and an election could be underway by this time next week.

Morse said he's not worried.

"Mr. Harper has made it clear that should he end up being prime minister ... he will honour any commitments that are in place," he said.

"While the agreement is not legally binding on a subsequent government without passage of the budget ... morally it would difficult for them not to honour the agreement."

But NDP Leader Darrell Dexter said the province has been too slow to firm up federal-provincial deals before an anticipated election.

"If it ensues, one thing is crystal clear: if a federal-provincial deal is not signed, Mr. Harper won't deliver on it," he said, noting that a \$145-million gas-tax deal for municipalities is also in jeopardy.

"It doesn't amount to anything unless there is an agreement."

Morse said that his officials are doing their best to get Ottawa to sign off on the deal before Thursday.

- reprinted from the Halifax Daily News

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