

NDP, Liberals square off over day care [CA-BC]^[1]

Author: CBC News

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 5 May 2005

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

NDP Leader Carole James accuses the B.C. Liberals of siphoning off more than half the federal dollars earmarked for childcare spaces in this province and using the money to pay for other programs.

"They basically used it to backfill programs and services that they cut," says James.

"Why haven't we seen those dollars that came to our province spent on childcare as they should have been. That was the agreement that they reached."

The Liberals deny diverting federal childcare dollars for other purposes, and claim they've created tens of thousands of day-care spaces in B.C.

Speaking in Lloydminster, where he was attending the Western premiers conference, Premier Gordon Campbell doesn't differentiate between the funding of childcare spaces and early childhood development programs.

"It goes to both early childhood development and childcare," he says. "We've actually increased the number of childcare spaces in British Columbia."

But those same childcare spaces are expensive for parents & running at about \$1,000 a month. And that's if they can get in. At one Vancouver facility, there's a waitlist of more than a thousand families.

Childcare advocates argue the current system has been devastated in the past few years. And they agree with the NDP that the Liberals have been diverting money to other programs.

"When the federal government's \$246 million over the last three years has been received, it's been taken and put into other programs, anything but childcare," says Sheila Davidson, the City of Vancouver's Child and Youth Advocate.

James says she is committed to adding 15,000 spaces over the next five years & with a total of \$650 million in promised federal money.

- reprinted from CBC News

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