

Child Care Working Group reinstated [CA-YT] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The Yukon government is reconvening the Child Care Working Group.

The move is the territory's response to Ottawa's plans to create a national child care program, and its promise to fund it to the tune of \$5 billion over the next five years.

"We're pleased the federal government has recognized the need across Canada for child care and early learning, and how much of an issue it has become," Health and Social Services minister Peter Jenkins said in an interview.

The group's job is to find places to spend the new money within the child care community, as well as identify some of the early-learning issues that need addressing.

Earlier this year, federal Social Development minister Ken Dryden tried to get all 13 provinces and territories to agree to a national child care strategy.

After a half-day meeting, the ministers gave up and decided to reconvene again after the federal budget was passed.

When the budget legislature passes, which is expected to happen within the next couple of weeks, the \$700 million now sitting in a trust fund will be made available to the jurisdictions this fiscal year.

The Yukon will get about \$210,000 of that amount, and then just over \$500,000 in the next fiscal year, said Jenkins.

Although the \$700 million is to be allocated on a per-capita basis, Dryden confirmed this is unfair to northerners, adding his government is working on a solution.

Another Yukon government concern is the \$100 million set aside for child care on aboriginal reserves and within self-governing First Nations.

As the Yukon has no reserves, Jenkins has asked the federal government for clarification.

But citizens of non-self governing First Nations living off reserves will be dealt with just like everybody else, said Dryden.

Another \$100 million has been set aside to ensure accountability.

This is a major issue for the governments and the child care working field, said Jenkins, adding the process will be made as simple as possible.

"We have a responsibility to ensure that money flowing to this purpose is ending up in that area," said Jenkins.

The territorial government is second only to Quebec in its per-capita spending on child care, and currently spends \$5.5 million a year on such programs.

- reprinted from the Yukon News

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