

Dryden confident child care plan will be embraced [CA] ^[1]

Author: Canadian Press

Source: Canadian Press

Format: Article

Publication Date: 3 Mar 2005

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Ken Dryden is confident the \$5 billion committed to child care in the last federal budget will alter the public's view of day care in the country.

The federal social development minister made the comment Thursday while visiting a child-care centre at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax.

Dryden told workers and students that Canadians will begin to view quality, subsidized child care as being as vital to the country as its public education system.

"Finally, irresistibly, irreversibly, we are on our way," he told child care workers and officials.

Dryden also predicted that view will cause the wages of child care workers to improve dramatically.

However, several people attending Dryden's speech told him the federal money isn't enough because it's spread over five years and shared by all the provinces and territories.

"I'm very concerned that \$1 billion a year over five years is not going to build a system," said Sue Wostenholme, who has worked in Nova Scotia non-profit day cares for 16 years.

She said there will still be a shortage of quality, licensed day-care spaces in Nova Scotia despite the funding.

Not all provinces are on board with other aspects of the proposed Liberal government plan. Quebec has its own child-care program, which advocates hail as a model for the rest of Canada.

The province says it shouldn't have to account for how it spends federal money because parents in that province pay only \$7 a day for child care and there are subsidies for low-income families.

Alberta also says it will take the cash but not the strings attached to how Ottawa wants them to spend the money. The province also wants the power to set up for-profit day cares, which some child care advocates say will hamper quality.

- reprinted from the Canadian Press

Region: Nova Scotia ^[2]

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funding ^[5]

federalism ^[6]

federal programs ^[7]

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/05/03/dryden-confident-child-care-plan-will-be-embraced-ca>

[2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7853>

[3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864>

[4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/public-opinion>

[5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding>

[6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federalism>

[7] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-programs>