

Dryden heaps praise on day-care system [CA-QC] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

When Social Development Minister Ken Dryden dropped by a day-care centre in LaSalle yesterday, the former Montreal Canadiens goaltender was mobbed by toddlers and parents brandishing hockey sticks, old hockey cards and books chronicling the Canadiens' glory years.

Dryden was in town yesterday to visit one of Quebec's subsidized day-care centres: the Centre de la petite enfance Familiarde de LaSalle.

After playing with the children and chatting with teachers, Dryden heaped praise on Quebec's subsidized day-care system, saying it serves as an excellent example for other provinces.

Apart from the \$7-a-day cost, Dryden said the high standard of education in the day-care centres is a sign of the Quebec government's commitment to early childhood learning.

"What you have done here in Quebec has given us in the rest of Canada an idea of how good it can all be," Dryden told the educators.

"You are an inspiration."

Dryden said last week's federal budget, which promised \$5 billion over five years for early learning and child-care initiatives, means Canada is "on its way" to having a national child-care program.

"What we need in the rest of Canada is a real system of early learning and child care," he said.

"The quality is very mixed. There are some good ones and some that aren't so good."

Dryden said talks are continuing with his provincial counterparts to try to finalize a national day-care program.

The provinces want guarantees that the program will be extended beyond five years. Also, Quebec wants to be compensated for the \$1.4-billion the province already spends on its day-care program.

Without making any promises, Dryden said yesterday Quebec will not be penalized for its "ambitious" investment in subsidized day-care centres.

- reprinted from the Montreal Gazette

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