

Child care program coming, PM promises [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The minority Liberal government will make good on a pledge to bring in a national child care program worth \$5 billion over five years, Prime Minister Paul Martin said yesterday.

Previous proposals have always foundered over the question of provincial funding, but the federal government plans to go it alone in hopes the provinces will join in, Martin said.

"This is the first time the national government has said we want to bring in a national system. We want to work with the provinces, but we will fund it and we would like to see it grow over time," Martin said.

"This is something that is very, very much needed. It's absolutely an idea whose time has come."

A national program would be of tremendous value to parents, especially women, he said.

Martin said Canadians expect the first minority government in a quarter century to succeed.

However, its success will depend very much on the opposition parties playing their part although he would not kowtow to them, he added.

"Canadians want to see the minority Parliament work, and fundamentally, I really do hope, that is the view of the other parties," said Martin.

"We've been very open with them. We're prepared to consult with them. (But) we have our agenda and we were elected on our agenda so we intend to carry it through."

Martin said he was heading back to Ottawa to put the finishing touches on next week's speech from the throne, which had to be at the printers early Saturday morning.

There would be "no surprises" in the throne speech, which the Liberal government will use to lay out its legislative vision and attempt to persuade the opposition to support it, he said.

"The throne speech is going to make it very clear that we intend to govern, we intend to get results."

The prime minister said the recent health-funding deal he worked out with the provinces is an indication that he is capable of getting results.

- reprinted from the Winnipeg Free Press

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[federalism](#) ^[3]

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/04/10/child-care-program-coming-pm-promises-ca>

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

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