

Day-care tax changes suggested [CA-NS] ^[1]

Barnet says municipal residential rates a better fit for centres

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EXCERPTS

Child-care centres should be charged residential, not business tax rates, says the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

Barry Barnet introduced amendments Wednesday to allow municipalities to charge the lower tax rate to licensed commercial day cares.

Mr. Barnet stressed municipalities would not be forced to do this, but during a meeting with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities last week, he urged them to get on board.

"Affordable, safe child care is important because it removes an obstacle to the workforce for low-income families and single parents," Mr. Barnet said at Province House on Wednesday.

"I said we should stop taxing them like they are no different than muffler shops or breweries."

He said the commercial rate in many municipalities is more than double the residential rate.

Heather Hansen-Dunbar, chairwoman of the Private Licensed Administrators Association of Nova Scotia Child Care Centres, said the change would mean a lot to many operators in the province.

She said medium to larger-sized day cares would save about \$5,000 while smaller centres would save up to \$3,000.

Ms. Hansen-Dunbar said she talked to an operator of a small centre who was thrilled with the idea of saving \$700.

"That would be money that she can turn around and immediately translate into playground improvements and increasing their resources and their lesson plan work and everything," she said.

Danzil David, the group's treasurer, said the margins are often very thin for these private operators.

Halifax Regional Mayor Peter Kelly says council will have to review the idea, which he called "a different approach."

Mr. Kelly said non-profit child-care centres in the municipality are already taxed as residential.

- reprinted from the Chronicle-Herald

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