Child-care centres get \$1.3 million in grants [CA-NS]

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EXCERPTS

Nova Scotia is doling out \$1.3 million in grants this week to some child-care and family resource centres.

Most of the funding, which comes from a federal early childhood development program, will go to part-time day cares to buy items such as skipping ropes, tricycles and dance videos to encourage physical activity, a total of \$726,000. Another \$300,000 will allow 22 additional licensed day-care centres to accommodate children with special needs.

But NDP community services critic Marilyn More said the province should be putting more money towards stable funding and adequate salaries.

Liberal community services critic Manning MacDonald said the announcement was great news. But he said the Hamm government should stop trying to take credit for money Ottawa has provided.

Community Services Minister David Morse said the province was very clear in 2001 about how it planned to spend the money from Ottawa, which he called the "junior partner" in providing child care in Nova Scotia.

He said Nova Scotia invests about \$20 million a year in child care.

Last month, non-profit day-care operators met with Mr. Morse to ask that \$1.3 million of a \$2.2-million federal child-care payment, which is due April 1, be used to increase the per diem rate paid to day-care centres.

They were told \$1.8 million was already designated and were given the remaining \$400,000. That will bring the per diem rate up 50 cents from the current basic of \$14.95. For children 18 months and under, there's an extra \$4, plus per-child grants of \$0.50 and \$0.75 for facilities and equipment. Parents also pay a minimum of \$2.25 per day.

- reprinted from the Chronicle-Herald

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