

Provincial cash for child care called 'wonderful' [CA-ON]^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Drafty windows, leaky roofs, and playground equipment that non-profit child-care centres had to get rid of but couldn't afford to replace -- they'll soon be taken care of, says Ontario's children's services minister.

Marie Bountrogianni, Hamilton Mountain MPP, announced yesterday the province will pass on \$9.7 million from the federal government directly to municipalities to help non-profit child-care centres fix buildings and buy new equipment and toys.

The money is the first instalment of \$350 million the province is getting for its share of a \$900 million, five-year federal plan announced last March for early learning and child care. The province has been allotted \$29 million next year, \$58.4 million the year after, and \$117.3 million and \$137.3 million in the last two years respectfully.

Although this year's allotment doesn't create new child-care spaces, funds in the next four years will mean thousands of more spaces for the province, Bountrogianni said.

Hamilton's non-profit childcare centres will share \$877,000 of the federal money this year with Niagara and Haldimand-Norfolk, but city staff don't yet know how much is earmarked just for Hamilton.

Ministry spokesperson Andrew Weir said the funding is based on the proportion of children here.

"I know it's not a lot of money," Bountrogianni said. "But it has to be spent by March (the end of this fiscal year)."

Bountrogianni said the way the funding has been handled by the provincial government is symbolic of a new era of passing on federal dollars to where they were meant to be spent.

"It's the first time in a decade that federal money on child care will be spent on child care."

Municipalities are not required to cost share in the funding as they do in other social services programs -- it'll be 100 per cent federal money, Bountrogianni said.

- reprinted from The Hamilton Spectator

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