

Minister has close links to issues [CA-ON] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

As minister of children's services, Marie Bountrogianni plans to improve the quality of child care while making it more accessible to Ontario families.

But first things first: She has to build the brand-new ministry "from scratch."

"I'm very excited about (that)," Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain) told reporters after being sworn in to her post.

At one time she also taught early childhood education.

She will be charged with implementing the Liberals' "Best Start Plan," initially providing families with financial assistance for child care and, over time, creating early-learning centres in schools that will provide day care, early-childhood education and parent training.

Bountrogianni also said she will "increase the standards of early-childhood educators," through ongoing training.

The Liberals have also promised to establish a governing body for the profession.

Child-care advocates yesterday lauded Bountrogianni, who is at the helm of a ministry Premier Dalton McGuinty said is dear to his heart.

"I've been talking about children for a long, long time," McGuinty, a father of four, told reporters during a news conference following his swearing-in. "If you get the early years right, a child is set for life.

You're building stronger citizens and a stronger economy."

She was head psychologist for Hamilton's public school board for 10 years and had stints with the Toronto and Peel boards as well. Bountrogianni has taught at McMaster, Wilfrid Laurier and Ryerson universities, as well as Seneca College.

A decade ago, the mother of two also managed a day-care centre.

"She's going to breathe life into the Premier's vision of integrating early learning and care," said former deputy education minister Charles Pascal.

He is now the executive director of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

Region: Ontario ^[2]

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