

Childcare community waiting to see funds [CA-YK]^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Childcare workers in the Yukon are still waiting for something in writing from the Yukon government that the \$230,000 promised in the legislature Wednesday will flow to the various daycare and dayhome facilities in the territory.

"It came as a complete surprise," Kismet Lowrie, a Yukon Childcare Association board member, said this morning of the promise from Health and Social Service Minister Peter Jenkins.

Until there is a guarantee in writing that the money will come through, it seems like a lot of talk to the childcare worker.

"Our government is firmly committed to addressing these issues of childcare and the day home operators and the daycare operators," Jenkins told the house during question period.

"There are two organizations that we are meeting with. We have met with them over the past month. We are structuring a committee in conjunction with these two organizations and membership from these two organizations as to how to best flow the \$230,000 that has been approved by management board and cabinet."

Speaking to reporters after question period, Jenkins said the money will come from a supplementary budget (additional spending on top of the main budget).

It's yet to be determined how the money will flow to the childcare facilities. However, Jenkins said a committee made up of representatives from the childcare association and the Society of Family Dayhomes along with government officials will get together to figure that out.

Lowrie said money is needed for materials, training and wages. On average in the Yukon, childcare workers make about \$10 an hour. When she was living in B.C., Lowrie noted, she was earning twice that as a childcare worker.

Even if the government comes through on its \$230,000, Lowrie isn't sure it would be enough.

"I don't think it's going to cut it," she said.

In the house Wednesday, Jenkins said the extra money will see the highest per-capita level of funding for children in day care in the country.

He also noted the government is planning on working with childcare workers over the next six months to address the long-term issues of childcare in the territory.

The Department of Health and Social Services will receive \$36 million over the next three years in addition to money from the federal government for childcare, NDP Health critic Eric Fairclough pointed out.

"This minister has millions of dollars spilling out of his pocket, yet they're still crying poverty - \$36 million extra and maybe even more," he said.

Jenkins replied that while the federal Liberals have announced they'll put \$750 million into childcare across the country, by the time the money weaves its way down to the Yukon, it amounts to only \$25,000.

-Reprinted from The Whitehorse Star

Region: Yukon Territory^[2]

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