

Liberal budget cuts threaten at least 30 B.C. day cares, says NDP [CA-BC]^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Government funding cuts threaten the survival of more than 30 British Columbia unionized day-care centres, NDP Leader Joy MacPhail said Tuesday.

Day cares across the province face a \$10 million government budget cut in April that's forcing operators to wrestle with options that include staff layoffs, wage cuts or closing, MacPhail said Lynn Stephens, the minister responsible for child care, said the government will no longer fund a 1997 labour agreement that would have paid unionized child-care workers up to \$16 an hour.

The so-called Munroe agreement -- named after mediator Don Munroe -- was reached with the previous NDP government to end an escalating strike in the social service sector.

"We will not be funding anything past March 31, 2003," Stephens said. "If the child-care centres themselves wish to continue with the wage rate that they were paying under Munroe they are perfectly free to do that."

MacPhail said up to 600 unionized day-care workers face layoffs. She said she could not estimate how many children would be affected by day care closures or staff lay offs.

MacPhail said thousands of children attend the day cares fighting layoffs or closure.

"I expect that they don't want to reopen as unlicensed minimum wage employers," she said.

The government's income tax cuts, which reduced government revenues by an estimated \$2 billion, are directly linked to the lack of funding for child care, she said.

The Liberals introduced a 25 per cent across-the-board personal income tax cut in June 2001, shortly after being elected.

Stephens said expected the day-care centres to stay open.

"They will do whatever they can to make sure those (child care) spaces stay open," she said.

-Reprinted from Canadian Press

Region: British Columbia^[2]

Tags: subsidy^[3]

funding^[4]

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