

Minister won't rule out slashing child-care funds [CA-ON] ^[1]

\$200 million in cuts will decimate system: Critics

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EXCERPTS:

Social Services Minister John Baird won't deny there is a government plan to cut provincial funding for regulated child care by more than \$200 million.

"I can't rule what will be in or out ... there are no guarantees in this world," Baird told The Star yesterday.

"I can't guarantee any funding will make next year's budget, but I can say every year we spend more and more dollars to support a whole range of children's programming."

Baird was responding to a report leaked to The Star that suggests the Conservatives are considering a plan to cut \$200 million from the \$470 million the province now spends on ministry-approved child care.

Critics say this would "decimate" subsidized care.

The Community and Social Services Ministry report has been given more weight since the government said it may have to find \$5 billion in cuts to balance next year's budget.

But New Democratic Party critic MPP Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt) told The Star if the government cuts the budget, "it would completely destroy the regulated child-care system in the province."

Martel insists the government has already cut regulated child-care funds by 15 per cent since 1995, and has cancelled all funding for renovations or building new centres.

Regulated child care is a mix of parents who pay full fees and parents who are subsidized. Staff salaries are also subsidized.

More than 17,000 children are waiting for subsidized regulated child care in Toronto, alone. On average, this type of child care in Toronto costs \$8,000 a year per child.

Mary-Anne Bedard, of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, said such a drastic cut would be the end of the province's subsidized care: "It would decimate it. There is no way regulated child care would survive that kind of cut.

"Every staff member in the province gets wage grants and child-care centres can't afford to make up that difference," she said.

Liberal MPP Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington) said such a massive cut would affect thousands of families.

"Without this support, these working families would not be able to afford quality child care. The government also provides wage subsidies for workers in child-care facilities. This enables child-care facilities to offer quality care at affordable rates," Dombrowsky said.

She contrasted the province's resistance to commit more money to child care to how the government has fast-tracked plans to give corporations a \$2.2 billion tax cut.

"My office has been deluged with letters, e-mails and phone calls from people who are indignant that this government would so callously consider pulling resources away from families and children to give to your corporate friends," Dombrowsky told the Legislature.

reprinted from The Toronto Star.

Region: Ontario ^[2]

Tags: subsidy ^[3]

advocacy ^[4]

funding ^[5]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/02/08/minister-wont-rule-out-slashing-child-care-funds-ca> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/subsidy> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/advocacy> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding>