

Universal child-care plan shelved [CA-BC] ^[1]

Author: McIntock, Barbara

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EXCERPTS:

The provincial government has quietly axed plans to expand universal affordable child care.

However, the current program to provide universal before-and-after school care for \$7 a day will survive, at least in the short term.

The universal child care plan, a highlight of the NDP's campaign platform in the last election, was scheduled to be expanded to include infants and toddlers on Jan.1. But those plans have now been scrapped.

Mini-budget documents released Monday did not specifically mention the child-care program, but stated that \$24 million would be saved through "program reductions since March."

Government officials confirmed that \$16 million of that would come through changes to the child-care plan.

Liberal MLAs said during the election campaign that they doubted the efficacy of a universal plan, and would probably prefer to put child-care dollars "where they are needed most."

Budget papers also revealed other cuts which the government has already made but did not announce to the public.

They include:

\$10 million from labour and skills training programs, particularly those designed to help retrain people who've been on welfare.

\$8 million from programs that were previously run through the Ministry of Volunteers and Co-operatives, mainly grants for some volunteer groups and for the development of "green communities."

\$7 million from the Ministry of Air, Land and Water Protection, mainly grants relating to climate change programs and for the development of more "green" businesses.

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