

B.C. government introduces bill to establish taxpayer-funded child-care [CA-BC] ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

The New Democratic government took another step Wednesday towards establishing a fully funded child-care system by introducing a bill in the legislature.

The NDP, in the waning days of its mandate before it must call an election, introduced the legislation to establish the structure and budget for child care B.C.

Social Development Minister Mike Farnworth said the plan will be in full swing by 2004.

"When this plan is fully in place in 2004, every working parent of a child aged 12 and under will have the option of enrolling their child in a publicly funded, licensed quality child care of their choice for a maximum fee of \$14 a day, he said.

But Liberal Opposition critic Katherine Whittred said her party, which polls suggest is widely expected to win the next election, would not be bound by the bill.

"We will not be responsible for costly programs that the government is introducing at the end of a mandate that is going to commit us to huge spending in the next few years," she said.

Under the proposed legislation, taxpayers will be putting nearly \$500 million annually into the program by 2004.

Quebec is the only other province with publicly funded day care.

At a news conference in January, the NDP said that by January 2002, the NDP would begin to pay for child care for infants and toddlers in licensed group care and children receiving licensed before- and after-school care in family settings. The plan will mean an increase to 85,000 licensed child-care spaces, up from the current 67,000.

It would be the second phase of a program that kicked in Jan. 1, when parents began paying \$7 a day for licensed before- and after- school care for school-aged children.

-Reprinted from The Canadian Press

Region: British Columbia ^[2]

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