

Daycare dollars ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Today, let's take a look at the Progressive Conservative Party's platform and childcare.

The major promise the Conservatives are making about childcare is the introduction of the Manitoba Universal Child Care Benefit. The benefit, \$100 a month for each child, would begin at age six and continue to age 12. This is a provincial extension to the current federal Universal Child Care Benefit, which ends at age six.

Like the federal Conservatives, the provincial Conservative approach is to put more money in family pockets, via benefits and tax reductions, and let families decide how to spend it. They acknowledge that many families use daycare services and as such, they are committed to maintaining the current growth of daycare spaces to reach 6,500 spaces by 2013.

It looks like current childcare programs would not change much, if at all, under a Conservative government. Additionally, families with school age children will get an extra benefit to offset the costs of before-and-after school programs. Speaking of after-school programs, the Conservatives are also pledging \$25 million over five years to support youth programming. Although its major target seems to be youth at-risk, it may also result in more before and after school programming at community centres.

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Depending on the personality of the children, or the restrictions of work schedules, a family may want to use more than one type of childcare. In this respect, the Conservative message of reducing childcare costs through the child care benefit and letting parents decide how to spend the money does resonate with me. The \$100 a month per six-to 12-year-old would help with care for older kids but not with preschool children.

More family money for childcare and reduced taxes are what the Conservatives promise. It seems like a good thing. How will it affect your situation?

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