

Wotherspoon presents plans for education, child care ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

A provincial NDP government under Trent Wotherspoon would change numerous aspects of child care and education in Saskatchewan, the party leadership hopeful and Regina Opposition MLA says.

"I'm a teacher myself. My wife is a teacher. My dad was a teacher and principal and I'm passionate about education, so this is a very important announcement to me. I also believe a broader view of education is foundational to the success of our province into the future," Wother-spoon said Wednesday.

Some key aspects of his "comprehensive" plan include making pre-kindergarten programs in public schools available to all four year olds; immediately reducing tuition fees by \$500 followed by a fully funded tuition fee freeze; passing anti-bullying legislation similar to that in other provinces; modernizing classrooms with technology; and closing gaps for aboriginal students, newcomers and women in non-traditional roles.

Wotherspoon's policy also includes about a dozen other changes, including making full-day kindergarten available provincewide; increasing childcare spaces and capping fees; upping the number of teachers and educational assistants; and establishing a northern Saskatchewan public policy institute.

"What I've put forward here today is a vision of a modern and inclusive education and childcare system in Saskatchewan," Woth-erspoon said. "It's one that speaks to the realities of today's families and today's economy and one that puts forward solutions that will better the lives of children and young people all across Saskatchewan, but also strengthen us economically."

Regina economist Erin Weir, another NDP leadership candidate, said he supports a fully funded tuition freeze, but added Wother-spoon's policy is a "wish list with no indication of how much any of it would cost or how to pay for it."

"You certainly couldn't deliver this plan overnight from a financial perspective," said Wotherspoon. "But it's one that allows us to plan towards, making sure those fiscal resources are in place, and you need to have priorities as a government," he said. "My view is that this is an area that's transformational for our economy and transformational for the lives of Saskatchewan people."

Saskatoon MLA and leadership candidate Cam Broten said Wotherspoon's ideas "are good, but we've certainly been talking about them within our party and they are, in fact, in many cases, official party policy." Ryan Meili, the other candidate in the race, could not be reached Wednesday.

- reprinted from the Star Phoenix

Region: Saskatchewan ^[2]

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