

Hike population by fixing daycare, NDP critic says ^[1]

Author: CBC News

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 21 Jan 2013

EXCERPTS:

A New Democratic MHA says Newfoundland and Labrador's population strategy must focus on helping young couples with being able to afford becoming parents in the first place.

"In tough economic times, couples choose to not have children," St. John's North Dale Kirby told CBC News.

"We have a situation where the sky-high cost of child care is creating tough economic times for ... couples that want to have children."

Premier Kathy Dunderdale last week announced that she had appointed Ross Reid to serve as the deputy minister of a population strategy. Dunderdale described the province's demographics as "scary" because so much of the population is aging and requiring many public services.

Kirby said he is looking forward to seeing details of the strategy, and would like to see pilot projects started rather than an overhaul of social policy that may not work.

He said the emphasis has to be on making it easier for couples to become parents, or raise more children.

"We need a decent system of child care so that everybody who is willing and able to work can," he said.

Kirby said the province could make a big difference to the bottom line of many families by moving to a system of full-day kindergarten.

He also said that the province's child care system is woeful and unable to serve many parents.

"Newfoundland and Labrador, despite the work of competent and trained early childhood educators out there, has the worst system. That's a fact," he said.

Kirby, who is the NDP's critic for education as well as child, youth and family services, said Reid's appointment is not significant, if there are not programming changes in the wings.

"Offices are one thing. Results are another thing," he said.

"Creating an office, changing someone's title, is not going to change the situation for working families in Newfoundland and Labrador."

-reprinted from CBC News

Region: Newfoundland ^[2]

Tags: demographics ^[3]

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