

B.C. NDP announce proposal to lower fees for infant and toddler care ^[1]

Author: Cole, Yolande

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EXCERPTS:

The B.C. NDP released a platform pledge today (April 18) to reduce fees and expand spaces for infant and toddler childcare.

NDP Leader Adrian Dix outlined a three-year plan to reduce fees for existing licensed infant and toddler care by 20 percent, and increase spaces where the need is greatest. If elected, the party says it would spend \$100 million over three years on the plan, starting with \$10 million in 2013/2014.

"Lack of affordable infant and toddler care is a major barrier to many women, especially single mothers, returning to the workforce," Dix said in a news release. "Childcare is the second highest family expense after housing, putting financial pressure on middle income households and putting childcare out of reach for lower income parents."

According to the NDP, the reduction in fees would affect about 12,000 families, and save each about \$2,000 a year.

Sharon Gregson, spokesperson for the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C., said she was "very pleased" to see the announcement.

"We were calling for first steps to address affordability for parents with infants and toddlers, and that's where this NDP announcement starts, so we're very pleased to see that," she told the Straight by phone.

According to Gregson, care for toddlers and infants is where the greatest crisis exists in the child-care sector, with parents facing longer waiting lists and fees that are in some cases almost twice as high.

Gregson said her group will continue to press for steps toward the \$10-per-day child-care plan the coalition has been advocating for.

"We will continue the momentum, calling for the \$10-a-day plan, which includes reducing fees further and building more spaces and improving wages of early childhood educators," she said.

In addition to the child-care announcement, Dix also pledged today to invest \$100 million annually in a plan intended to improve classroom learning conditions by hiring new teachers, teaching assistants, librarians, and counsellors.

The NDP have stated they will gradually release their election platform during the first eight days of the campaign. Wednesday (April 18), Dix said the party would spend \$100 million annually on a student grants program, and \$40 million on skills training.

-reprinted from Straight.com

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