

NDP vows to cut child-care fees by 20% ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

NDP leader Adrian Dix used a campaign stop in Sidney to highlight his party's promise to reduce child-care fees, while also asking voters who might be flirting with the Greens to stick by his party.

Dix gathered South Island NDP candidates in a park in Sidney, where he reaffirmed the "critical importance" of affordable child care.

The NDP's \$100-million child-care plan will cut fees in family and group daycares by 20 per cent, affecting 12,000 children, Dix said.

"This will save families up to \$2,000 a year," he said. "It will assist parents, especially women, in getting back into the workforce, and it will make life a little bit more affordable in a time when the pressure, particularly on the middle- and working-class families, is so high."

The savings will only be for licensed facilities and apply to children up to three years old, said Carole James, NDP candidate for Victoria-Beacon Hill and party platform co-chair.

An NDP government would increase the provincial child-care operating grant to private facilities on the condition they reduce fees by 20 per cent, she said.

Child-care advocates say it's a good proposal, but only one step toward more spaces and lower fees.

"It will have a significant benefit for parents currently on the front lines with young children," said Sharon Gregson, spokeswoman for the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C., which has called for \$10-a-day universal childcare. At a cost of up to \$2 billion, both the Liberals and NDP have said such a program is unaffordable.

An estimated 240,000 children up to age five were in some form of child care in B.C. in 2012, according to government figures, though there are only approximately 100,000 licensed child-care spaces in the province.

The B.C. Liberal government has an existing child-care subsidy of up to \$750 per child monthly for low-income families, which costs the government more than \$142 million per year.

The Liberals are promising \$32 million over three years to create 2,000 new licensed child-care spaces, a new provincial office to co-ordinate early-learning strategies and a variety of tax credits for parents.

Dix also used his Sidney campaign stop to respond to B.C. Green advertisements in Greater Victoria that say the New Democrats have already won the provincial election and so South Island voters should feel free to vote for a Green candidate.

Dix said his party is leading on environmental issues, but victory is not assured. "Elections in B.C. are always close and if you think the NDP should be the government, then you should vote NDP."

Nonetheless, the Green strategy to woo NDP voters has local candidates worried. Gary Holman, NDP candidate in Saanich North and the Islands, has urged progressive voters to unite behind the NDP and not take victory for granted.

Green leader Jane Sterk called it a "deliberate strategy" to portray the NDP as having already won, thereby encouraging local New Democrats to take a chance voting for Saanich North and the Islands Green candidate Adam Olsen, and Oak Bay-Gordon Head candidate Andrew Weaver.

"It's a good strategic provincial campaign message because it's true," said Sterk. "All the evidence, despite the last poll tightening up, suggests we're going to have an NDP government."

-reprinted from the Times Colonist

Region: British Columbia ^[2]

Tags: affordability ^[3]

election ^[4]

funding ^[5]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/05/ndp-vows-cut-child-care-fees-20> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/election> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding>