

NDP's Tom Mulcair pitches House of Commons daycare for MPs

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EXCERPTS

The House of Commons may soon be home to change tables, playpens and high chairs.

And no, this is not a joke about politicians' sometimes infantile behaviour.

A generational shift among the elected officials, means there are more MPs juggling political portfolios with parenting.

Leading the baby boom are members of the Official Opposition. The NDP's MP for Beauharnois-Salaberry, Anne Minh Thu Quach, gave birth to a baby girl this past Saturday and another MP, Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe, is expecting her first child in August.

Just two of the reasons NDP leader Tom Mulcair is now pushing for some help with the work/life balance inside the House of Commons.

On Tuesday, Mulcair sent a letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons asking the Board of Internal Economy, the committee made up of MPs from all parties who run the budget for the House of Commons, to consider addressing that issue directly.

The NDP leader writes that after discussions with the NDP's women's caucus, "...it has been proposed that a reasonably costed pay-for-service, drop-in childcare would be most suitable to the needs of parliamentarians."

Mulcair points out that the Board of Internal Economy has already changed a long-time "spouses lounge" near the Commons chamber to better suit the reality of MPs by deeming it the "family room" from now on.

The NDP has almost a dozen MPs with babies and small children, but other political parties are also dealing with growing caucuses. Liberal MP Scott Brison and his husband recently welcomed twin girls and Justice Minister Peter Mackay is also father to a toddler.

A daycare on Parliament Hill was created by former Speaker Jeanne Sauvé to serve MPs, staff and journalists working on the Hill.

But MPs from all parties struggle with the hours their jobs demand of them, either during late-night votes or committee hearings.

Mulcair writes that he hopes there will be more discussions on the issue and that all parties will be able to work together.

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