

Liberals promise no-wait public child care ^[1]

Author: Pursaga, Joyanne

Source: Winnipeg Sun

Format: Article

Publication Date: 14 Mar 2016

AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The Manitoba Liberals vow to eliminate the wait for public child care, if elected.

The party would invest an unspecified amount in infrastructure to create more spaces. They'd also spend an additional \$30 million to train and retain early childhood educators.

"For every day that an individual does not get back to the workforce ... you lose almost \$5,000 in provincial tax revenue. So this is a great investment in the future of our province," said Liberal leader Rana Bokhari.

There are currently more than 12,000 children on Manitoba's central child-care waiting list.

Bokhari said it's too soon to set an exact timeline of when that could be eliminated, however, though starting that effort would be a top priority in her first term of office.

Bokhari said her party would explore the creation of new daycare buildings but also spaces in existing hospitals and offices that could be renovated to offer child care.

The Liberals don't know exactly how much that infrastructure would cost but plan to fund it through provincial dollars previously set aside for roads, bridges and other hard infrastructure.

"We need to proactively be investing in our province and it can't always just be roads and highways. We have to be investing in social infrastructure as well," said Bokhari.

Bokhari says she would postpone non-essential projects to find those funds but declined to name any examples.

The Liberals would also lobby for federal daycare funds.

But Bokhari completely ruled out expanding private daycare.

"I think Manitobans need to know that their child-care spaces are safe, that they're regulated properly and that's just what we're committed to doing," she said.

The Liberals also promise a sliding scale of child-care fees to reflect what parents can afford.

The plan is quite similar to an NDP vow to add 12,000 child-care spaces over the next seven years, which Premier Greg Selinger expects would cost between \$50 million and \$60 million per year.

By contrast, Progressive Conservative leader Brian Pallister believes eliminating the entire wait list isn't realistic.

"Eliminating the list, it's a nice thing to say. It's like other promises politicians sometimes make. It may over reach the ultimate possibilities," said Pallister. "There's no province that doesn't have a wait list."

Pallister said the Tories will offer a plan to shorten the wait list in the near future and repeated that his party is open to including private daycare options.

-reprinted from Winnipeg Sun

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