

Party candidates square off in child care debate leading up to Manitoba provincial election ^[1]

Author: CBC News

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 16 Mar 2016

AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The Manitoba Child Care Association is planning to put child care at the top of the list of election issues, starting with a debate between three provincial election candidates, which took place on Wednesday night.

Liberal candidate Kyra Wilson; the New Democratic Party's Kerri Irvin-Ross and Ian Wishart, a candidate for the Progressive Conservatives sat before dozens of people in Université de Saint-Boniface, taking questions from the audience.

The questions covered a range of topics, including a lack of child care facilities in Winnipeg and rural communities, and Irvin-Ross took time to assure audience members of the NDP's commitment to improving care in the province.

"We know that child care needs to be universally accessible, needs to be affordable. We need to be making investments.... The NDP since 1999 have worked on that plan," she said, reminding the audience that since then, the party has developed more than 14,000 spaces.

Wishart, however, said the approach isn't working.

"We feel that one approach alone, which has been the not-for-profit model that has been operating and expanding is really not enough ..." he said.

Wilson focused on the Manitoba Liberals' promise to implement full-day kindergarten for all children in the province.

"I'm actually really excited about the all-day kindergarten," she said.

"When you look at an all-day kindergarten program for children, you're freeing up those child care spaces. So our families are actually having to pay full fees for child care when your child's only actually in daycare for part of the day."

The debate was the first of several that are expected to take place before Manitoba's provincial election on April 19.

-reprinted from CBC News

Region: Manitoba ^[3]

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