

Manitoba election: NDP pledges \$25M for more public child-care facilities ^[1]

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The Manitoba NDP expanded on previous promises to boost child-care services if re-elected, but the Progressive Conservatives say Greg Selinger is "trying to fool Manitobans" into voting for the party by bombarding them with the same announcements over and over again.

"Re-announcing a commitment on [multiple] separate occasions and thinking you can fool Manitobans into voting for you while the wait list for a daycare space continues to grow is just another example of broken trust from a broken government," a PC spokesperson said in a statement.

The New Democrats have already vowed to add 12,000 child-care spaces over seven years. Selinger announced Sunday that his party would also invest \$25 million in building community-operated child-care facilities if elected April 19.

The spaces would be owned by the province but leased to non-profit organizations to ensure there are more spots for families. Selinger said St. James would get its own new centre that would provide at least 100 child-care spaces.

Neither commitment would be successful without the other, Selinger said, adding every new school being built right now includes plans for adjoining daycare facilities.

"That's just fundamental now," Selinger said at St. James NDP candidate Deanne Crothers' campaign office on Portage Avenue Sunday. "Children don't wait for five years; they're growing up every single day. This will allow families to work, earn decent incomes for themselves."

Selinger said when it comes to child care, it's important that Manitoba has a government committed to investing in the public and non-profit sector.

Pallister absent at debates: NDP, Liberals

The joint plan "is a big difference from what we see from Brian Pallister" and the Progressive Conservatives, Selinger said, inviting the PC leader to reveal more details about his party's child-care plans.

"We're prepared to debate these policies; you're hiding in the bushes. You've been cancelling debates," Selinger said. "We haven't seen you out there being accountable for what you're going to do to Manitoba."

The Manitoba Liberals said Pallister's failure to attend leaders' forums is the reason some have been cancelled.

The PCs rejected the claim Pallister has shied away from debate. Pallister is slated to take part in five leaders' debates before the election and has made himself available to media frequently for interviews on the campaign trail, a spokesperson with the party said.

NDP hasn't made child care a priority: Liberals

A spokesperson with the Liberals said the Selinger government has had years to meet child-care targets they've unveiled in recent weeks, but "are still a long ways off."

"They have been chipping away at it, but have not made it a priority," a spokesperson with the Liberals said.

"We are committing an extra \$30 million yearly to core funding, which is well above the NDP commitment. We are talking this issue seriously. The others are not."

Selinger said a Pallister-led government would risk undoing years of investment in public child-care services if elected.

During a March 16 candidates' debate, Portage la Prairie PC candidate Ian Wishart said the NDP's reliance on the not-for-profit child-care model has left gaps in care. Selinger said that's a sign the PCs would try to privatize parts of the child-care system.

"You can't pretend you're in favour of daycare and not have a commitment to it; you can't say that you support daycare while you're talking about privatizing it, and you can't talk about good choices for the public and avoid public debate," Selinger said.

Manitobans head to the polls April 19.

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