

Child care, housing key priorities for families minister ^[1]

Author: Monsebraaten, Laurie

Source: Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 15 Jun 2016

AVAILABILITY

Read online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Jean-Yves Duclos was used to running his own show as director of the economics department for Laval University in Quebec City.

But since accepting Justin Trudeau's invitation to run for the Liberals last year and his appointment to cabinet as minister for families, children and social development, the renowned economist and co-founder of the Poverty and Economic Policy Research Network has embraced teamwork.

Duclos knows he will need all the help he can get to fulfill an ambitious mandate handed to him by Trudeau, including introducing the child benefit, delivering a national child-care framework and crafting national strategies on affordable housing and poverty reduction.

In a wide-ranging interview before the introduction of the Canada Child Benefit on July 1, the 51-year-old father of three, spoke to the Star about the challenges ahead and some of the surprises that have come with the job.

What has the transition from academics to politics been like?

It has been a great privilege. At the university, most people work alone. But in government it is all about teamwork. I have a great appreciation of the incredible commitment and ability of the public servants I work with. They are incredibly intelligent and knowledgeable and committed to the work they do. It's very humbling.

There was no mention of Ottawa's poverty-reduction strategy in the budget. What is happening on that score?

We have started work. All the provinces and territories already have poverty-reduction strategies except British Columbia. A large number of municipalities also have strategies. For a national poverty-reduction strategy, we want to take advantage of the work that has already been done. My department acts on many fronts in terms of poverty reduction. The Canada Child Benefit, housing, homelessness, Old Age Security, the social transfer and grants . . . We want to make sure this is complementary and not adversely affecting the efforts of our partners. We are still in the listening mode.

When will you be ready to act?

To be honest, my biggest priority now is the child-care and early-learning framework and a national housing strategy. Those two things will form the ingredients to the broader poverty-reduction strategy.

Child care is a huge issue for Toronto parents. Wait lists for licensed care are long. And many pay monthly fees as high as mortgages or rent. What are you going to do about this?

It is a common concern for all Canadians. Provinces want to be partners. They don't want to be told what to do. They also said they are very happy that Ottawa is back and there to assist them. We are going to use fairly limited dollars. We are going to invest \$500 million next year in 2017-18. That's a drop in the ocean. In Quebec they spend \$2 billion for their \$7-a-day program. And another \$2 billion for the child-care tax credit. So overall as we see very clearly, \$500 million for the federal government is modest. Flexibility, innovation, inclusiveness and quality will be a key. We want to have the greatest impact for the resources. We will be looking for demonstrations on how such investments will have an impact on our society.

Do you think Canada will ever have a universally available, affordable, quality child-care system?

We'll see. We are at the very beginning. Sometimes we're surprised.

You have children, how old are they?

They are too old to go to child-care services, 12, 15 and 18. But all three were in child care. My eldest just missed the beginning of (Quebec's) \$5-a-day system so we have seen both the before and after.

What work is being done on the national housing strategy?

I have a meeting with provincial and territorial counterparts on June 28 in Victoria. We hope at that time to be able to make an announcement to say how we are going to engage over the next few months. We hope to have the strategy by the end of 2016. People are ready. They are both ready and willing to contribute.

What skill has helped you the most since you entered politics?

The ability to listen. If someone wants to do something useful in politics he or she has to be a very good listener. Regardless of ambition, intelligence, preparation, listening is a key condition.

-reprinted from Toronto Star

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: federal programs ^[4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/06/child-care-housing-key-priorities-families-minister>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/06/child-care-housing-key-priorities-families-minister> [2]

<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2016/06/15/child-care-housing-key-priorities-for-families-minister.html> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-programs>