

# The 'un' factor <sup>[1]</sup>

Opinion

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

'Un' is a prefix meaning "not," freely used as an English formative, giving negative or opposite force in adjectives and their derivative adverbs and nouns. In the field of family childcare we often use the words 'unlicensed', 'unregulated', 'untrained' yet for many government officials and people outside the field of childcare those 'un' words are not viewed as negative – simply a choice that parents should be allowed to make regarding the care of their children.

There are regulations governing the manufacturing of items like cribs, strollers, carseats, and toys etc so parents know they are safe. There are regulations regarding the production, packaging, and labeling of food products to ensure they meet predetermined standards so people know what they are buying. Why do government officials and the general public think that parents should be able to choose unlicensed, untrained childcare but need regulations to assist them to safely feed, house, and transport their own children?

What other career field allows some businesses to operate unlicensed and/or untrained when others providing the same service are licensed? What is the incentive for any business to be licensed if they can legally operate without any oversight? Without any licensing/training requirements? What if, like in childcare, they could actually make more money if they were not licensed/trained than if they were licensed/trained?

Let's use truck drivers as an example. The majority of adults have a class 5 driver's license and have experience driving their own or a friend's vehicle. What if there were no restrictions on what size of vehicle you could drive and anyone could just decide "Hey, I'm going to buy a big truck and start a business delivering things for other people."

Why, is an experienced driver with their own vehicle not allowed to start up a trucking business without additional training or license? Why don't people argue "It's his truck, he can do what he wants with it. If other people are OK with letting him transport their stuff why not let him/them. He's never had an accident and doesn't need a little piece of paper to prove he's a good driver."

What if that same driver or another class 5 driver then decided "A bus isn't much different than a big truck. If I had a bus I could earn money driving people around." What if you'd seen that driver on the street with his bus full of happy passengers and decided to take a ride on his bus. Then imagine that one day there was an issue – something was wrong with the bus or the driver. What if it is too late to get off the bus before the accident happened?

Some argue that licensing all childcare facilities and requiring training for all childcare workers doesn't ensure quality – but it helps. Just like trained bus/truck drivers in licensed companies will still have accidents there are standards and checks in place to limit them. Why don't we hear arguments that training/licensing truck drivers doesn't prevent accidents so let's save some money and not bother requiring them to be licensed?

Do we need more incentives for family childcare providers to become licensed or do we need to eliminate the option for them to operate unlicensed childcare homes? Currently only licensed providers can accept government subsidized families but private paying families usually pay higher rates than the maximum subsidized rate so that isn't an incentive to be licensed.

What about training? Currently family childcare providers with Early Childhood Educator II/III training can receive slightly higher subsidized rates than untrained providers but those rates are still lower than the private rates most unlicensed/untrained providers charge so why bother? Just think of all the tax dollars we could save if we had trained and untrained police officers – both had the same duties but the city could pay the untrained ones less – but either trained or untrained officers could go work privately for more money without a gun permit or any other type of license.

In an effort to increase the number of licensed childcare spaces, the provincial government is considering lessening the requirements and 'red tape' needed to open licensed childcare homes. Why, when there was a shortage of family doctors was it never suggested that we lower the requirements to become a doctor? I don't think lowering FCC licensing requirements will increase the number of licensed childcare spaces and I'm absolutely positive it won't improve quality.

What part of licensing do they think is unnecessary? Criminal record/child abuse registry checks? First aid training or a 40 hour course? Behaviour management, nutrition, safety and supervision policies? Adequate equipment? Developmentally appropriate activities? Documentation and record keeping?

I don't think any part of the licensing process is difficult or unnecessary. If fact, I'd like to see more. I'd like to see MANDATORY licensing for ALL childcare homes. Greater incentives for trained providers (possibly higher ratios). MANDATORY annual professional development and more. I'm thinking about the best interests of the children, not just convenience and the cost for quality and safety.

-reprinted from Cheryl's Child Care Blog

**Region:** Manitoba <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** regulated family child care <sup>[4]</sup>  
regulation <sup>[5]</sup>

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