

Why the government needs to overhaul the current child-care system ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

It's not enough, Premier Wynne.

While we appreciate the sentiment behind Ontario's decision to add 100,000 child-care spaces in the next few years, it won't fix a broken system. Failures of Ontario's daycare system include a lack of affordability for parents, unlicensed care competing against licensed centres, as well as the inability to consistently attract and retain quality early-childhood educators. Adding more spaces to this foundation means the system will limp on and nothing will be fixed.

It has become apparent, in our eyes of this media organization and many of the experts we've interviewed for our child-care series, that a reform of the current structure will fail. We need a heavier government investment and a complete overhaul of the system. This must come now.

There are parents who feel the financial pinch each month. They fret about paying daycare bills and are forced to cut back in other areas. Perhaps they try to shave a few dollars off the weekly grocery bill, avoid an occasional dinner out or hold off on vacation. They may sink a bit further into credit card debt just to pay daycare bills.

The implications of a poorly subsidized child-care model are far-reaching. But quality child care is too often viewed as a privilege in this province. The government's belief that 20 per cent of a parent's income should go toward paying for daycare is absurd and archaic - other jurisdictions around the world have proven affordable daycare can improve overall living standards without bankrupting an economy.

Our current system forces well-educated Ontarians to make tough choices. Some put careers on hold because a large portion of their income would go toward paying for their children to be in daycare. Let them practice their craft. They may be loving, nurturing parents, but most are not professional educators adept at preparing children for higher learning.

Ontario must also give ECEs the same financial dignity as teachers.

ECEs are trained professionals responsible for the well-being of some of the most vulnerable people in our society. They shape young minds when those children are most eager to learn and yet their paycheques reflect jobs of a low skill level.

Most parents want safe, affordable care that best positions their children for success. Quebec and Sweden offer great examples of how this can be offered to and paid for by families.

Revolutionizing daycare, overhauling what is delivered and how, is the best way to improve the system.

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