

Funding shortfall threatens thousands of daycare spaces [CA-ON]^[1]

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EXCERPTS A daycare dilemma could be just months away for some Toronto families. Nancy Matthews, the city's manager of daycare, says thousands of daycare spaces — close to 25 per cent of all city-run subsidized spaces — are being threatened. Matthews is blaming the cuts on the upcoming loss of more than \$63 million in subsidies from the federal government. The federal child-care money was first handed out by former prime minister Paul Martin and then extended temporarily by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. That money is no longer being promised by Ottawa. In total, it amounts to \$63.5 million per year for Ontario. The City of Toronto plans to cut 6,000 subsidized spaces if the province doesn't replace the federal money it will be losing. Matthews said that if she has to make cuts, she will do so gradually — for example, not filling a space once a child leaves. ... Ruby Malobago is one of the parents who could be hurt by the cuts. She's going to have another child in April, and was hoping to get a subsidized space at the Red Apple Day Care Centre near her home in Toronto's Flemingdon Park. But if the spaces are cut she'll have to quit her job and go on welfare in order to look after the child. ... "It leaves me with three children, no daycare and no work, probably. I need daycare [in order] to go to work," she said. Some daycare experts say the cuts could start this fall, and the problem isn't isolated to Toronto. Thousands of spaces could be eliminated in other parts of the province as well. Nina Locke, the director of the Red Apple Day Care Centre, said the cuts would devastate the low-income families in her neighbourhood. "In this area at least 90 per cent or 95 per cent of the daycares are subsidized," said Locke. Advocates are now calling on the province's Liberal government to cover the \$63.5-million shortfall, saying the Liberals still haven't lived up to their 2003 election promise to spend \$300 million on daycare. So far, the province hasn't said whether or not it will cover the shortfall. - reprinted from CBC News

Region: Ontario^[2]

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