

Ottawa, provinces get poor grades for child care: Union [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The federal government is failing the country by not providing working parents with more access to affordable and quality child care, a national labour union says.

The Canadian Labour Congress gave Ottawa and the provinces poor marks for their delivery of child care in a series of "report cards" released Thursday.

The critiques were delivered just as another national group put forward its own report, arguing that the job of providing child care should be taken out of the federal government's hands all together.

The Canadian Labour Congress, which represents 3.2 million workers, released its report cards for nearly all of the Canadian provinces and territories, grading their child-care delivery.

All of the provinces were given Cs or Ds with the exception of Manitoba, which was given a B+. The federal government was given a grade of "incomplete."

"Since the Conservatives . . . took power in 2006, things haven't improved," union executive vice-president Barbara Byers said in a statement. "Working women continue to face a surplus of promises and a shortage of results."

The poor review came more than two years after Stephen Harper's government came to power and cancelled a Liberal plan for a national child-care program.

Quebec was not ranked because the union says the province already has a functioning program.

The union said more spaces are needed because 75 per cent of Canadian mothers with preschool-age children are in the paid workforce, but only 16 per cent of children had access to regular child care in 2004.

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"Provincial governments could do so much more if the federal government was there with stable, predictable funding and support," said Byers.

"They aren't getting the job done for working parents. Fees are going up. New spaces are being created at a much slower pace than before. Wages for child-care workers continue to range from fair to far too low."

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The previous Liberal government promised a national child care program in 2004 and had begun to sign collaborative deals with the provinces. Harper quickly cancelled the plan when his government came to power in early 2006, choosing instead to channel funds directly to families.

Child-care providers across the country have continued to ask for more funding and support. Waiting lists exist for the majority of service providers.

Pat Wege, executive director of the Manitoba Child Care Association, said the province still suffers from a lack of spaces despite the fact Manitoba was touted in the Canadian Labour Congress report.

"Waiting lists here are astronomical," she said, adding that waiting two to three years was not uncommon. "The majority of parents trying to get into licensed care won't; that is the sad reality."

"There's not enough child care anywhere in this country. Any government in every province has been, so far, unable to meet the growing demand."

- reprinted from Canada.com

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