

Child care: Options for all [CA] ^[1]

Letter to the Editor

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Re: Lee Harding's letter "We're both better for it" ^[2], September 5, 2007

Lee Harding's letter would have benefited if he had read the study Janet Bagnell was reporting on. The main point made by Kevin Daly's study was that countries with public policy that helps families balance work and family (tax treatment, paid maternity leave and good child care) have higher birth rates and higher women's labour force participation rates than those that leave them to go it alone.

Second, he is extremely selective about which bits of child-care research he mentions, and what he says about it. For example, the large American study he cites is called "Study of Early Child Care"; 73 per cent of the children were in some kind of child care by six months, and 58 per cent by three months.

In Canada, with one year of paid parental leave (which the U.S. doesn't have), this is simply not the case.

Third, Harding identifies Dalmia and Snell as "San Francisco Chronicle journalists", signifying objectivity, when in fact they work for the Reason Foundation, of which the Wall Street Journal said "Of all the nation's conservative or free-market policy groups, it may be the most libertarian among them."

Another example: The Jay Belsky quote should be followed by what he said next: "Given the clear benefits of high-quality child care, more of these services are called for". Belsky also recommends that the United States introduce maternity leave "like Sweden's".

Finally, I would make the point that the main reason Canada should have a real system of high-quality early learning and child care and good family policy is that it's the right thing to do for families and children. Indeed, the United Nations considers early learning and child care to be a right to which a child should be entitled.

No, it shouldn't be compulsory -- as it isn't in the many other countries that do have these programs.

Parents like Harding are entitled to stay at home and not send their children to child care, preschool or kindergarten.

But why try to prevent those who want and need it from having something too?

Martha Friendly

- reprinted from the Regina Leader-Post

Region: Canada ^[3]

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