

Decent child care vital to province [CA-ON]^[1]

Editorial

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EXCERPTS

An illegal, unlicensed child-care centre where children are often left unattended to play beside a swimming pool that is not fenced in. Underpaid and poorly trained child-care workers in licensed daycare centres where inspections found children being kicked and slapped, forcibly confined in closets and playing in filthy conditions.

Such examples of shoddy care exist across the Greater Toronto Area and around the province, as an ongoing Star investigative series into daycares has shown.

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While the Star's findings are disturbing, the solutions to them are obvious, and fairly easy to implement. First, more licensed daycare spaces must be created, and staff must be more professionally trained.

At the heart of the daycare problem is a need for high-quality, affordable child care. The province insists that it cannot significantly increase daycare spaces in the coming years because Prime Minister Stephen Harper killed the previous Liberal government's national early learning and child-care program, effective March 31. The result was that Ontario lost about \$1.1 billion in federal funds that it expected to receive over the coming years for daycare. In its place, Harper introduced a \$100-a-month payment to parents with children under age 6.

At the same time, Premier Dalton McGuinty has yet to live up completely to his campaign promise to invest \$300 million in daycare. To date, Ontario has pledged just \$75 million for new child-care spots. All other government money pumped into daycare has come from Ottawa, virtually all of it under the previous Liberal regime.

Other provinces, including Quebec and Manitoba, have stepped in after Harper's announcement to fund the system themselves. But in Ontario, without adequate money from either Queen's Park or Ottawa, residents are left with a failing system that has too few licensed spots, too many illegal operations and too few inspectors.

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Even if parents find a licensed spot, a report last week by a provincially appointed panel on daycare quality found that most child-care workers at such facilities are poorly paid and undertrained. On the day the report was released, Children's Minister Mary Anne Chambers announced that Ontario will spend \$97 million to help raise wages and subsidize training for child-care workers.

Her announcement is encouraging news for parents with young children seeking quality daycare. But more can, and should, be done.

For too long, Ontario's child-care system has operated with underpaid child-care workers, high parent fees and small subsidies.

Quality child care provides a stimulating environment critical for optimum child development. That's why both Ottawa and Queen's Park should adequately fund a high-quality, affordable daycare system for all children in this province who need it.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

Region: Canada^[2]

Ontario^[3]

Tags: quality^[4]

funding^[5]

legislation and regulation^[6]

[3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/quality> [5]
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/legislation-and-regulation>