

# Provinces, territories to share \$250M for child-care spaces [CA]

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**Author:** Greenaway, Norma

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

The minority Conservative government has done an about-face on child care and decided to rely on provincial governments rather than businesses to create a promised 25,000 child-care spaces in the coming fiscal year.

Under the budget plan announced yesterday, the provinces and territories will divvy up \$250 million to create the spaces.

Critics dismissed the sum as a drop in the bucket of what is needed to meet child-care demands in the country.

"Working children and families are getting crumbs," said NDP MP Olivia Chow, the party's child-care critic.

The \$250 million is almost \$1 billion less than the provinces and territories would have received in fiscal 2007-08 under agreements they signed with the former Liberal government.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced last year he was cancelling the Liberal program at the end of this month.

The Conservatives' original plan called for replacing it with \$250 million a year worth of tax incentives and grants to businesses and other organizations to create spaces.

By opting to funnel the money through the provinces and territories, the federal government bowed to those who had argued businesses were not interested in getting into the child-care business.

The revamped plan, first reported by CanWest News Service last week, said it would be up to the provinces and territories to create spaces that are "responsive to the needs of parents and are administered in an efficient and accountable manner."

Monica Lysack, executive director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, said she is glad the government has given up on having businesses create the spaces. But she said the plan offers too little money and too little accountability to be effective.

"They have made a U-turn, but without the money," she said. "There's no accountability. It's money out the window with nothing to show in return."

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Provincial ministers had pressed the government to restore the almost \$3.5 billion in child-care funding promised by the former Liberal government over the next three years.

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The \$250 million will be divided on a per capita basis. Under the formula, government officials said British Columbia will get \$33.1 million; Alberta \$25.9 million; Saskatchewan \$7.5 million; Manitoba \$9 million; Ontario \$97.5 million; Quebec \$58.5 million; New Brunswick \$5.7 million; Nova Scotia \$7.1 million; Prince Edward Island \$1.1 million; and Newfoundland and Labrador \$3.9 million. The three territories will get a total of \$700,000.

Deb Higgins, minister of learning in Saskatchewan, said directing the money to the provinces is better than pumping it into tax credits that business won't use. But she said the \$7.5 million the province gets is a "far cry" from the more than \$30 million it stood to get under the Liberal plan.

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- reprinted from the Ottawa Citizen

**Region:** Canada [2]

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