

# It's not too late to keep child-care promise [CA-ON]<sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

With a provincial budget merely a few days away, a deafening silence emanates from Queen's Park as far as the future of early learning and child care in Ontario is concerned. Since Dalton McGuinty sees himself as the "education premier," this silence is surprising.

It is hard to imagine that McGuinty, someone who by all accounts understands the importance of the early years in a child's development, would have nothing to say on this foundational social program in the last budget of his first term.

So given the absence of any mention by any Ontario representative regarding child care in the past year, the element of surprise must be the game plan for the upcoming budget.

The storyline certainly points in that direction. Four years ago, the soon-to-be premier had quite a bit to say about early learning and child care. As Liberal party leader, he declared his commitment to the children and families of this province by proposing what would become the Best Start Plan.

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And he and his party promised \$300 million in new provincial funds for child care, to make this all happen. But three budgets later, both money and political will are still waiting.

To be fair, some advances have been made as Best Start has unfolded: 14,000 new child-care spaces, local networks to help Best Start establish in communities across the province, and wraparound care for 4- and 5-year-olds. But all of this without a single new provincial dollar in more than 10 years. How is this possible?

Given the priority that early learning and child care had received until the federal agreement was scrapped, the 2006 budget provided Ontario with a golden opportunity to show real leadership on the issue, as Manitoba and Quebec have done.

But instead of coming through with its funding promise, Ontario squandered the opportunity to send a message about the importance of the early years and the jurisdictional "blame game" began.

The result is that our nascent child-care system is in crisis.

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There is so much to gain by making the right call on child care:

More than 30 years of research and the wisdom of parents who have seen their children bloom in high-quality child care, prove over and over that all of community, society and the economy stand to gain immeasurably from a public investment in early learning and child care.

While the cancellation of the federal child-care funding was a real blow to Ontario's child-care vision, there is every reason to hope that McGuinty makes good on his \$300 million promise.

As parents, advocates and child-care professionals, we're hoping for a surprise in the budget: much-needed new provincial dollars for early learning and child care.

Our children and our families deserve no less.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

**Region:** Canada<sup>[2]</sup>

Ontario<sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** advocacy<sup>[4]</sup>

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/07/03/its-not-too-late-keep-child-care-promise-ca> [2]  
<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [4]  
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/advocacy>