

Tory government must step up on child care [CA] ^[1]

Editorial

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EXCERPTS

One year after being sworn in as prime minister, Stephen Harper has yet to unveil an in-depth, child-care strategy aimed at helping parents who are struggling on a daily basis to balance work and family life.

It is unacceptable for a developed nation such as Canada to have pushed child care to the back burner, particularly when families continue to toil to find quality care for youngsters. It is a major issue that deserves immediate attention from a federal political party and its leader who claims to hold family so dear.

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The Tories must rethink their decision as they finalize their spending priorities for the next fiscal year.

That is also the message organizers of the Code Blue for Child Care campaign are trying to get across as budget preparations continue in Ottawa. Representatives of the grassroots organization have given the federal government Fs in three areas -- providing universal child care, helping parents balance family and work and honouring past agreements.

Code Blue for Child Care said Canada is at the bottom of the heap among developed nations when it comes to child care and the PM seems intent on maintaining that position.

An Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development report, released in October of 2004, described Canada's child-care system as a chronically underfunded patchwork of programs with no overarching goals. It found many day-care centres were shabby and many workers were poorly trained. As well, staff turnover at many facilities was very high.

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It is time for Harper to show Canadians how committed he is to family -- not just to his own, but to the thousands of working mothers and fathers across this nation who cannot afford to stay at home all day with their children. Doling out more cash for child-care services is one way to demonstrate that commitment, and in turn, may lead to much-needed votes when a federal election is called.

- reprinted from The Daily Graphic (Portage La Prairie)

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