

The National's report on the federal Child Care Spaces Initiative [CA]^[1]

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Source: CBC-TV

Format: Article

Publication Date: 10 Jan 2007

AVAILABILITY

See transcript excerpts below.

EXCERPTS

PETER MANSBRIDGE (HOST): It was affectionately called Cash for Kids, the Conservatives' campaign promise to give families 1,200 dollars a year per child under six. Parents have been getting their cheques since July, but Stephen Harper also promised to create 25,000 daycare spaces a year. One year in to his government's mandate, advocacy groups say the spaces are scarce and the wait lists long. Julie Van Dusen reports.

JULIE VAN DUSEN (REPORTER): Rachel Inch enjoys every moment with five and a half month old Ella, but always on her mind, what to do about child care when she goes back to work.

RACHEL INCH: It could be up to a two-year wait to find a spot in a registered daycare in Ottawa.

JULIE VAN DUSEN (REPORTER): Baby Ella isn't the only one without a spot: 7,000 children in Ottawa alone are on a waiting list for licensed child care spaces. It's a problem right across the country.

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JULIE VAN DUSEN (REPORTER): A year ago, a campaigning Stephen Harper promised to ease the child care crunch saying a Conservative government would create 125,000 spaces over five years with the help of the private sector and non-profit organizations, which would get a 10,000 dollar tax credit for every space created.

STEPHEN HARPER (PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA, JANUARY 6, 2006): We figure we'll reasonably create about 25,000 spaces a year.

JULIE VAN DUSEN (REPORTER): But a year later, nothing.

MONICA LYSACK (CHILD CARE ADVOCACY ASSOCIATION OF CANADA): There has not been one new space created.

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JULIE VAN DUSEN (REPORTER): Victoria Sopik was appointed to sit on a committee to advise the Harper government on how to implement its plan. She is also the president of a company that creates daycare spaces for corporations.

VICTORIA SOPIK (KIDS AND COMPANY): Business has lots of interest in childcare. We lost our business four years ago. In the last four years, we have over 300 companies that signed up to be clients.

JULIE VAN DUSEN (REPORTER): But not everyone in the business community agrees.

CATHERINE SWIFT (CANADIAN FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESS): It may work with a larger company on large premises, but for the small and medium sized business sector, it's not likely to be practical.

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JULIE VAN DUSEN (REPORTER): The new Minister responsible for Child Care, Monte Solberg, wasn't available for comment. His office says he's still learning the file. Since the plan for spaces promised a year ago hasn't even been completed yet, there's no indication when the first space will be created. Julie Van Dusen, CBC News, Ottawa.

- reprinted from CBC-TV

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