

Advocates fear Tory committee too biased [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Daycare advocates slammed the federal Conservatives yesterday, saying a new ministerial advisory committee on child care is unnecessary and biased against non-profit daycare.

MP Olivia Chow (NDP—Trinity-Spadina) said the nine-member committee appointed this week by Human Resources Minister Diane Finley is "packed" with private-sector appointments while provinces, and not-for-profit experts in child-care delivery are marginalized.

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Chow said five committee members are on record or work with organizations "which are on record supporting the Conservative child-care scheme as opposed to public, not-for-profit child-care spaces."

...

Only one committee member is associated with the delivery of public child care, she said. Others suggested two members could be considered friends of non-profit child care: Don Giesbrecht, president of the Canadian Child Care Federation, and Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz, head of Imagine Canada, which promotes social entrepreneurship.

Morna Ballantyne, co-ordinator of Code Blue (a coalition of 30 organizations lobbying for a national daycare program and operational funding along the lines promised by the federal Liberals) echoed Chow's concerns.

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Ballantyne questioned the need now for a committee whose advice "will be prejudiced" given its makeup.

The chair of the new committee is Gordon Chong, who ran for the Ontario Progressive Conservative party in 1987. A former city councillor and head of GO Transit, Chong now heads Toronto's social housing services corporation.

...

He said it is "unfortunate" that Chow and other critics have "prejudged what conclusions we're going to come to because I certainly haven't done that."

Colleen Cameron, the minister's press secretary, yesterday dismissed the critics' concerns. The committee members were selected for their "expertise and experience in child care, work-family issues, community organizations and the needs of employers," she said, not their adherence to the Conservative party's line.

Don Giesbrecht of the Canadian Child Care Federation, who was also named to the committee, said he's "keeping an open mind" about the work.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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