

Daycare for poor should be priority ^[1]

Editorial

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EXCERPTS

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Across Toronto, 6,000 subsidized child-care spots, many of them in the city's less affluent areas, will not be created because the Conservatives have cancelled spaces the previous Liberal government had promised to create, report city officials who have assessed the impact.

Nor is the problem limited to Toronto. All across Canada, children from poorer families will be harder hit by the loss of these spaces. That's because Canada's least privileged children already have less access to regulated child care, according to a national study released this past week.

"The situation where the communities with the greatest social capital obtain the most resources is far too common," says the report, *Learning From Each Other: Early Learning and Child Care Experiences in Canadian Cities*. Commissioned by the federal government and the cities of Toronto and Vancouver, the study cites "class-geographical inequalities" as a major issue in the distribution of daycare spaces.

This problem seems likely to worsen as the Conservatives abandon funding deals the Liberals struck with the provinces to create thousands of new daycare spaces. Promising to give parents "choice," the Conservatives will hand out \$100 a month for every child under the age of 6.

But for poor families who cannot find regulated child care in their neighbourhood at any price, \$1,200 a year, less taxes, doesn't offer much of a choice. What many need is access to subsidized daycare spaces. That is why a universal, national child-care program is still the best option.

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Short of funding a full national system, Harper should at least be open to providing meaningful assistance for those who need it most. He could begin by consulting with the provinces to see how a program of regulated, affordable daycare targeted at low-income workers and students could best be funded and delivered to communities where there is an obvious need. If Canada is ever to meet its commitment to abolish child poverty, programs of this sort will be needed. Moreover, it is intolerable that the neediest have less access to daycare than others.

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- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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