

Child-care program off to bad start [CA] ^[1]

Editorial

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

The plan to give the parents of every child under age 6 the sum of \$1,200 was one of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's most popular electoral promises. Many parents warmed to it even more, it seemed, after a Liberal adviser sneered that they would blow the money on popcorn and beer.

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In power, Harper made the necessary changes, putting aside \$3.7 billion over two years for the program, and, today, the \$1,200-a-year benefit goes into effect.

Unfortunately, the government has not notified parents of children under age 6 that they must apply for it. The result is that parents of an estimated 124,000 children have yet to apply for the monthly \$100 cheques.

In fairness, the vast majority of the parents of young children will be sent the cheques automatically. Those are the parents of about 1.9 million children who already receive the Canada Child Tax Benefit or who have applied for it in the past and in the Canada Revenue Agency's database.

Still, 124,000 children is a large number to leave out. It seems an unnecessarily messy way to start off a program that has scarcely been a stranger to controversy already.

The controversy has to do with the actual amount of money any given family would receive as a benefit. Last month, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy did a financial analysis of the benefit, taking into account the fact that the benefit will be treated as taxable income, along with the government's decision to kill off the young child supplement.

The Caledon Institute's analysis found that no family of small children will end up with the full \$1,200. This will come as unpleasant news to a lot of families waiting for the money.

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The Canada Child Tax Benefit application form can be downloaded from www.cra-arc.gc.ca/benefits ^[2], or obtained by calling Canada Revenue Agency at 1-800-959-2221.

- reprinted from the Montreal Gazette

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