

# Child-care advocates frustrated by Conservative plan [CA-ON] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

Code Blue for Childcare was the urgently worded theme of a town hall-style discussion at the Kiwanis Community Centre in Stratford last night on the federal government's plan to end the national child-care agreement.

The Perth County Child Care Action Network hosted the meeting which featured eight panelists in a discussion in front of an audience of about 45 people.

Co-ordinator Sandra Gardiner and Barb Hobson, manager of Child Care for Stratford and Perth County, both expressed disappointment over the federal plan to end the agreement, which will mean an end to the bulk of the funding for the Best Start child-care program.

The program initiated by the former federal Liberal government was originally to provide 300 new day-care spaces for children up to six years old in local schools. The reduced funding under the Conservatives will allow only 85 new spaces to be provided.

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Avon Maitland schools were to serve as hubs for new child-care centres under the Best Start program.

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Perth-Wellington MP Gary Schellenberger found himself defending his Conservative government's child-care policies throughout the meeting. He said the plan to replace the agreement with monthly payments of \$100 to parents of children six years old and under allows them to make child-care choices based on their needs, including shiftworkers who need child care during hours when publicly operated facilities are not open.

He also promoted the Harper government's plan to create 125,000 new day-care spaces over five years through tax breaks to employers who will develop the facilities for children of their staff. Mr. Schellenberger said the \$250 million for the new spaces was part of the federal budget. He added that most parents he has spoken with since the election campaign are supportive of the Conservative plan for child care and prefer it over what was offered by the previous Liberal government.

Perth-Middlesex MPP John Wilkinson said he's upset to see the child-care agreement "ripped up," after the Liberal government in Ontario lobbied for so long to have it signed. Mr. Wilkinson said he respects the \$1,200-a-year payment to parents but believes the federal government has the financial ability to continue the agreement along with it.

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- reprinted from the Stratford Beacon-Herald

**Region:** Canada <sup>[2]</sup>

Ontario <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** advocacy <sup>[4]</sup>

federalism <sup>[5]</sup>

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