

Child care plan facing problems [CA-ON] ^[1]

Letter

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The province's Best Start program to create affordable, accessible child - care spaces is in trouble . If governments don't live up to their responsibilities, the loss of federal funding for child care could mean that thousands of planned spaces for children across Ontario may never come to be. The good news is, it doesn't have to be that way.

When Ontario got rid of the OAC grade in high schools, the money saved was supposed to go into an early education program for 3-year-olds. We now have neither Grade 13 or an early learning program -- so where did the savings go? The province also receives \$240 million annually from the federal Early Child Development Initiative, yet Premier Dalton McGuinty has been silent about this source of income. Add to this the potential income from taxing the Tories' child allowance and you've got the basis for a meaningful , sustained investment in child care .

Since instituting its child care plan in 1997, Quebec has seen its child poverty rate drop significantly. The increased workplace participation of mothers and the resulting tax revenue from their income covers 40 per cent of the cost of the program, a figure expected to rise to 50 per cent in the next five years. Given the strength of Ontario's economy, there's no reason why we can't do the same for our kids.

The loss of federal funding is a setback and a shame , but it shouldn't be the end of the province's involvement in child care. By keeping our commitment to early learning , we can still make sure Ontario's children get the best start we can give them.

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Region: Ontario ^[2]

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