

'Huge betrayal' of children [CA-ON] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's pledge to scrap federal-provincial child-care agreements will strike a heavy blow to thousands of children in Toronto's neediest areas, Councillor Janet Davis says.

Nearly 60 new projects in the city — most to be built in schools — providing more than 3,600 new child-care spots in neighbourhoods with the highest poverty, now likely won't be built, Davis told reporters yesterday.

Davis, council's child-care advocate, called it a "huge betrayal" of the children of Toronto.

"Maybe for hundreds of families this means a parent won't be able to go back to work. Mostly it will mean there will be more children in questionable child-care arrangements that are cheap," she said.

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Without the federal money, Toronto loses millions a year in new child-care services and supports, Davis said. For instance, provincial child-care money of \$69 million will now be spread out over four years instead of one.

The first phase of Toronto's "Best Start" child-care expansion — the completion of 63 projects scheduled to open in August, plus funding incentives from the province, will provide 3,400 new spots.

But the second phase, which called for the creation of 3,621 daycare spaces and was to begin in September, may never be created.

And thousands of new child-care fee subsidies are also at risk, Davis said.

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Jane Mercer, executive co-ordinator with the Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care, said in Toronto one in three children are living in poverty, yet in a decade there's been very little expansion in terms of new child-care spaces, and no new subsidies.

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- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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