

# It's mostly middle-class convenience [CA] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

Who really benefits from child care?

Meet Pamela Robinson, a typical victim of the national child-care crisis. Ms. Robinson is a Toronto academic who specializes in urban planning. Her husband is getting his PhD. They have their daughter in an elite daycare program at the University of Toronto. A while back, she was forced to turn down a great job in Prince Edward Island, because, she says, the local daycare program just didn't measure up. For one thing, it was in a basement.

"Everybody's kid should have the choice to go to the same kind of child care our daughter goes to," said Ms. Robinson, who told her hard-luck story to the Toronto Star.

Are you sorry for these poor, deprived people? Me neither. You'd think the Star, a tireless lobbyist for national daycare, would be able to dig up a decent victim. Maybe a single mother who works at Costco.

Trouble is, those people don't use public daycare. Public daycare is overwhelmingly a middle-class and upper-middle-class entitlement.

...

So how is that celebrated Quebec model working? Is it giving Quebec's children the best possible start in life?

Well, not exactly. The reviews are mixed. One recent study (done by child-care advocates for the Institute for Research on Public Policy) found that six in 10 daycare centres in Quebec meet only "minimum" standards for health, safety and stimulating child development. In other words, they're probably no better and no worse (but certainly more expensive) than parking the kid with the neighbour.

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Daycare is highly ideological. Its advocates exaggerate its benefits, and its detractors probably exaggerate the downside. What we can say is that it's an enormous convenience to middle-class parents. It's also phenomenally expensive.

...

Expanding Quebec's program across the country would cost around \$6-billion a year. The Liberals' program -- the one we've heard that Stephen Harper wants to cruelly dismantle, even though it isn't off the ground -- promised \$5-billion over five years. That's a gap of \$5-billion a year. That's a heckuva long way from universal daycare.

And not all that money would have been spent on daycare spaces anyway. But, as usual in politics, facts don't matter. Better to conjure up an image of vulnerable kids at risk -- even though more daycare wouldn't help them at all.

- reprinted from the Globe and Mail

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