

Crisis looms in child care [CA-ON] ^[1]

Expected funding short by \$1.4 billion; Thousands of daycare spaces at stake

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

Every evening after work, Brampton mom Meredith Sahebzada spends almost an hour criss-crossing town to collect her three children from two daycare programs.

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Sahebzada and her husband Moshtaq were hoping their local school would get federal money to add daycare space for 4- and 5-year-olds this summer in time for their daughter Leila to start junior kindergarten next fall. With a school-age daycare program already operating in the school, it would mean Leila and her 8-year-old brother Sharif would be together.

The couple's youngest son Ilias, 2, would still be at a daycare in downtown Brampton. But at least he would be joining his siblings soon.

Those hopes were dashed with Prime Minister Stephen Harper's decision to cancel the previous Liberal government's \$5 billion national child-care initiative by this time next year. In its place, Harper is proposing a \$1,200 taxable allowance to parents for each child under age six.

Ontario was expecting \$1.9 billion from the old federal-provincial deal and was planning to open 25,000 new child care spaces in schools by 2008.

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But in last week's provincial budget, Ontario began to prepare for the worst. It warned municipalities that the federal money for this year would likely be the last — and that some \$1.4 billion is at stake.

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Jenny Taylor, who recently earned a two-year early childhood education diploma, was thrilled to land a job at a new child-care centre last September.

The centre at St. Sylvester Catholic School in northwest Scarborough is one of 62 new or expanded school-based child care programs Toronto is supporting with its first instalment of federal-provincial child care money.

But with ongoing funding now in doubt, Taylor is nervous about her future. "It might make me look at other career options," she said.

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Jane Mercer, head of the Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care, says several hundred newly hired child care workers in the city face similar uncertainty. If the federal money dries up and the province doesn't pick up the slack, Toronto's entire 45,000-space system will be in crisis as the city is forced to shrink, she predicted.

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- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/06/03/crisis-looms-child-care-ca> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/budget> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federalism> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-programs>