

# Parents scrutinize candidates' child care claims [CA] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

With the Jan. 23 election looming and candidates promising new ways to improve child care, one parent is not ready to take those promises to the bank.

A mother, who asked to remain anonymous, has a 21-month-old son attending a day-care centre in Niagara Falls.

She said although the issue of child care may influence how she will vote, she hasn't yet heard enough from the candidates - who have a substantively different vision about how to deal with day care - to be convinced.

"I can look at a plan and support it, but until it becomes a reality, it's hard to put your complete faith into it."

She said the issue of child care deserves the attention of politicians because it "socially benefits" children.

"Day-care centres are an important part of a child's development, whether it be socially or emotionally. I'm looking for a party who will assess the needs of children, make those needs clear to the public and then support parents who are otherwise unable to put their children in day cares."

Patricia Heidebrecht, the region's director of children's services said there is a high demand for child care in Niagara.

She said about 100 children are on the region's wait list for one of 6,800 licensed spots for kids from birth to age 12.

In July, the government announced Niagara can expect up to 540 more licensed day-care spots over the next three years as part of a \$5-billion national child-care plan with about 200 more federally funded spots by the end of March.

"Our economy requires a quality child-care system and it's essential that we continue to work towards achieving these goals," said Heidebrecht.

- reprinted from Niagara Falls Review

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