

# Day care: Does Harper care? [CA] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

Lock up your kids! Everywhere we look this week, political candidates are seeking photo opportunities with babies -- kissing them at campaign stops, reading to them in day-care centres.

So what's the attraction?

Mom, really.

And if you look at the Tory day-care plan, then you have to conclude that the Conservatives think mom is pretty dumb.

Why else would she fall for being offered a day-care plan that is not a day-care plan?

Because Conservative Leader Stephen Harper's promise to give families \$1,200 per kid per year that they could use towards day care wasn't about creating day-care spaces -- despite his tawdry offering of 125,000 spaces compared to the 625,000 promised by the Liberals.

No, it was a crass attempt to woo the women's vote without alienating his "religious right" membership who believe kids should be at home - with their moms - not in day care.

So he wraps it up as a \$1,200-per-kid subsidy for day care but makes no provisions to ensure it's spent on day care. So when is a day-care plan not a day-care plan? When it's a tax cut which is what Harper's plan actually is, notes McMaster University professor and political analyst Henry Jacek.

How crazy is this? This is like saying here's \$1,200 for health care -- you can use it toward a hospital stay, but not necessarily. And by the way, if we did that, we wouldn't have hospitals or health care. Just like \$1,200 per family is not going to create day care. Why should you care?

You might care if you believe day care is infrastructure that provides a service that helps businesses and the economy and helps women and families who need it, not just choose it.

You might care if you don't buy the fact that angry white guys in Alberta yelling that a woman's place is in the home will change the reality of women and men who are single parents and need day care, or in families where two incomes are an economic necessity. And you certainly won't buy it if you don't think those guys shouldn't dictate how you choose to raise your kids or decide what is best for your family.

You might also care because if policy around infrastructure and services is dictated by a single group's moral values, then there's a lot at stake.

- reprinted from the Hamilton Spectator

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