

NDP MP says Liberals too conservative with child care cash [CA]

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EXCERPTS

A new study pointing to widespread discrepancies in quality and access in Canada's child care services confirms the urgent need for a national Child Care Act, Tony Martin, NDP social policy critic said today.

"The Liberals think money and deals with the provinces and territories are enough but some provinces may never build a high quality system if there is no enforcing national legislation," said Martin.

"This is why New Democrats are pushing for legislation, meaningful accountability standards and guarantees that public money will only go to "not for profit" centres."

The study, Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2004, by the University of Toronto's Childcare Resource and Research Unit, provides a snapshot of early learning and child care programs in 2004 and tracks spending and service trends back to 1992.

Martin said while he is encouraged that there are more child care spaces than ever before, other findings are disturbing -

- Quebec still accounts for 65 per cent of all spending on child care with Alberta and British Columbia spending declining,
- the serious problem of access where only 15.5 per cent of children 0-12 could be accommodated in regulated programs in 2004,
- more centres closing than opening in three provinces,
- financial support to low income parents stagnating,
- public funding per space fallen since 2001 in six jurisdictions,
- the number of for-profit operations increasing in Ontario, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and PEI, while overall dropping from 30 percent to 20 per cent since 1992. Studies have consistently shown that higher quality care is found in the non-profit sector.

"We have been clear from the very beginning," said Martin "that we need a national child care program that is worth its salt and that will actually deliver"

- reprinted from LTV News

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