

Spotty daycare needs a cleanup [CA] ^[1]

Letter to the editor

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Re: Get it right from the start, Jan. 18, 2005.

As a mother with a young child in daycare, I have been following the federal and provincial wranglings over the proposed national child care plan with keen interest. Next month, Ken Dryden, Canada's minister of social development, will be meeting with provincial and territorial representatives to iron out the details of the \$5 billion in five years which has promised by the feds to improve our embarrassingly spotty system of child care. It's not enough, but it's a promising start.

Last fall's internationally administered OECD report was a shocking critique of the Canadian system of early childhood education.

We should be ashamed. Many studies have made it abundantly clear that the years up to age six are critical as the foundation of a child's future abilities.

I will never forget my shock when exploring our local day-care choices at the appalling state of what is considered acceptable care. Many if not most of the facilities I visited are in horrendous disrepair, dirty, with unusable or non-existent playgrounds. Standard lunchtime fare is bologna on white bread and drink crystals. The quality of the developmental programming is all over the map, yet all these facilities have waiting lists with no real incentive to improve. Of course, there are jewels in the system, and we were fortunate to find such a facility. I'm still haunted by the fact that what should be considered substandard daycares are full.

These kids deserve better.

Doing anything less than ensuring that every child, everywhere in Canada, has access to healthy and learning-rich experiences, regardless of his or her parents' income, educational background, or place of residence, is doing a grave disservice to our future as a nation.

Any and all resources necessary to achieve these goals must be rallied - Canada has no resource more precious than our children.

Let's hope for all our sakes that the February talks go well.

Kathleen Sandusky, Toronto

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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