

Parents, child care advocates tell McGuinty: "Make budget day Mother's Day" [CA-ON] ^[1]

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Source: Canadian Press

Format: Article

Publication Date: 9 May 2004

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

Toronto - Mothers and child care activists used Mother's Day to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty to live up to his campaign promise to transfer federal child care money to municipalities.

A small group of parents and young children gathered Sunday at a day-care centre in a downtown housing co-operative to urge McGuinty to guarantee his government's May 18 budget will transfer \$58.2 million in federal child care money directly to municipalities.

They shared a brightly-decorated Mother's Day cake and displayed oversized handmade cards they intended to send to the premier.

The federal money was announced by the government in its March budget, and it's time for that money to filter to municipalities, said Jane Mercer, the executive co-ordinator of the Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care.

"This provincial government, in the run-up to the election, made a campaign promise that they would spend the majority of that money on child care," said Mercer, who accused the previous Conservative government of redirecting federal child care money elsewhere.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care said recently that six municipal day-care centres could close over the next 18 months because Ontario is not funding its fair share of regulated spaces.

Toronto could be forced to close 1,100 subsidized day care spaces and could face a real crisis if it doesn't get the funds by June 1, said Janet Davis, a city councillor.

Without the money, day-care centres in Toronto wouldn't close, explained Mercer, but only those parents who could afford to pay the full rate could enrol their children.

Social Services Minister Marie Bountrogianni told the legislature last month that the federal cash will be spent on child care.

But she said the money had not yet arrived in the provincial treasury.

Mercer said Bountrogianni has given assurances the government is committed to families, but she added: "please tell us the money will flow."

- reprinted from Canadian Press

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Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/04/05/parents-child-care-advocates-tell-mcguinty-make-budget-day-mothers> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/gender>