

Don't treat kids like water, child care advocates tell [CA-ON] ^[1]

Canada NewsWire General News

Author: Canada NewsWire General News

Source: Canada NewsWire General News

Format: Press release

Publication Date: 6 May 2002

AVAILABILITY

Excerpts below.

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TORONTO - "Don't make the same mistake with children that you did with water," Sid Ryan will tell Premier Ernie Eves this week.

The President of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario Division and a coalition of child care workers and advocates are seeking assurances from Eves and Brenda Elliot, the newly appointed Minister of Community, Family & Children's Services, that they will not follow through on their predecessors' plan to end regulated child care.

"Government rules supporting the well-being of children attending child care are as critical as regulations protecting the water supply," Ryan said. "I expect this government has learned the lessons of Walkerton and will make the health and safety of young children its first priority."

The group is reacting to a provincial document leaked last November detailing a 40% cut to the province's \$471 million child care budget and options re-directing the remaining \$270 million into tax incentives. Government spokespersons have taken pains to distance themselves from the document but have not committed to ending their assault on child care spending. The Tories have removed \$90-million from regulated child care since taking office in 1995.

"Expansion-- not cuts-- is needed," said Cheryl DeGras, Executive Director of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. "We only need to look next door at Quebec to see that when child care is available and affordable it is the first choice of parents. Ontario parents also want the safeguards that government licensing and monitoring provides. A tax credit is no substitute for peace of mind."

"Child care workers, parents and their children will send this message to government MPPs on May 14, in a Day of Action for Child Care," announced Ottawa child care worker, Shellie Bird. "As adults we welcome government regulation of the cars we drive, the buildings we enter, the food we eat. We must provide young children with these same protections."

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