

# Why we need to invest in pre-school child care now / We're failing our children [CA-ON] <sup>[1]</sup>

Opinion-Editorial / Letter to the editor

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## AVAILABILITY

Text below

### EXCERPTS:

Life begins at birth...not just when children head off to school.

It is beyond me why this province does not have a universal child care programme for pre-school children. As we know from the Early Years study commissioned by our current provincial government, the most critical time for learning is that span between birth and six years of age.

Yet we continue to ignore this fact, continue to minimize the importance of this critical time in life, pay poverty level wages to the professionals providing the teaching, nurturing and care and begrudge having to shell out the dollars for this essential service.

The issue at hand is, making resources available to ensure quality child care is available to all children and their families in this province. The reports are in; the early years are important and it is our provincial government that is telling us this.

They have paid for the study and heard the answers, yet refuse to put dollars towards ensuring quality child care and now would like to reduce the budget in the name of more choice. The average cost of full-time care is \$500 per month or \$6,000 per year for one child.

The stress that this puts on a family is enormous.

If we want to reduce this stress level for young families, let's make a universal programme.

Let's put the federal dollars that have been allocated for children to good use.

Let's make an even playing field and ensure quality child care for everyone. If Mr. Harris and his colleagues want to leave their mark on this province I hope it is not at the expense of our children.

I am tired of hearing people say that "we have raised our children and paid our fair share" or "we didn't ask for help to raise our children".

These are different times and for the majority, it takes two incomes to raise a family.

If we want our children in this province to be ready for school, strong members of this community, and leaders for all of us in our old age, we need to invest now.

We can throw all the money we want at the school system (we all know the crisis they are facing), but if the children are not ready, our investment in the school system is wasted.

We have to start at birth and support all families with children, create a consistent launch in life, leaving one less stress to manage and ensure a healthy start.

With the support of the provincial government families can have a choice, but it means investment, not decreased funds.

With the right support, choices are limitless and families can choose between home child care and licensed child care, stay home part-time or full-time and take advantage of parenting programmes that will enhance family life and promote early childhood development.

This is a time for creativity and commitment to further enhance the foundation of this province.

Our foundation lies in that of our young people. By being proactive and preventative we can move this province forward.

By focusing and investing in our children between birth and six years of age we can prepare them for the future so they are ready for school and the challenges that lie ahead of them.

Brad Inglis is executive director of the Centre Wellington Resource Group and a member of the Mercury's Community Editorial Board. He lives in Guelph.

## WE'RE FAILING OUR CHILDREN

Letter to the editor,  
Guelph Mercury, February 18, 2002.

Dear Editor

Re: Why we need to invest in preschool child care now

Brad Inglis has it absolutely right -- high quality child care could both support parents and help ensure all children (regardless of parents' labour force participation) have the best possible start in life. Public funding and policy to support this are commonplace in western Europe, even those in which women are much less likely to work outside the home than we do in Canada.

The only thing that Mr. Inglis omits is the sad fact that it is not only Mike Harris' battered Ontario that fails to deliver this essential programme (indeed, the Harris government has done its best to undermine existing child care services that have mostly been developed through hard work of community volunteers) but the rest of Canada outside Quebec as well.

Federal and provincial governments across Canada are failing children and families. Our political leaders prefer to squabble, posture and swan around on trade missions instead of getting down to the harder work of providing good government that makes intelligent social policy.

Martha Friendly,  
Coordinator, Childcare Resource and Research Unit

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**Region:** Ontario <sup>[2]</sup>

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