

The daycare dollar gap [CA-ON]^[1]

Editorial

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EXCERPTS Subsidized daycare enables low-income parents to return to work or enter training programs to upgrade their skills – both things our economy desperately needs. So with 14,000 families in Toronto alone waiting on a list for daycare they can afford, we should be talking about how many new spaces governments are funding. Instead, we're facing the prospect of losing as many as 22,000 spaces across Ontario – including 6,000 subsidized spaces in Toronto – because Premier Dalton McGuinty is acting as though he doesn't understand the municipal budget process. McGuinty says "we've got 14 months" to convince Ottawa to keep funding the daycare spaces. But time is much shorter than that. Municipalities deliver daycare, and without a guarantee of \$63 million from Ottawa or Queen's Park to keep those spaces open, they'll stop filling them when there's turnover in September. Cities simply can't afford to be on the hook for delivering unfunded daycare. Given that last month's federal budget did nothing for daycare, the window for federal funding has effectively closed. It's now up to Queen's Park to keep those spaces open, with funding in the provincial budget in the next few weeks. Yes, Ottawa should continue to fund these spaces, started by the previous Liberal government. But there's no indication that's going to happen under Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government. Harper believes handing out \$100-a-month cheques is all it takes to provide "universal child care." Never mind that this pays for less than three days of licensed daycare. Not surprisingly, a United Nations report recently ranked Canada last among developed nations when it comes to providing affordable and quality daycare. ... McGuinty's reluctance to take on responsibility for a federal program is understandable given that Ontario is already facing a large deficit and hard choices in core sectors like education and health care in its upcoming budget. But lack of affordable daycare will undermine many of McGuinty's much-hyped plans for the province. He wants to sustain existing jobs and stimulate the economy. How does that square with losing some 4,000 jobs for child-care workers if these daycare spaces close? He wants to reduce child poverty by 25 per cent. How can mothers be expected to lift their children out of poverty when it takes nearly their entire paycheck just to pay for daycare? He wants all Ontarians educated and working to their full potential so we can compete globally. How can that happen if people are forced to stay home because they can't afford daycare? While encouraging the federal government to fund the spaces, McGuinty said: "There's a good economic argument for us to continue to support those ... spaces." Indeed, McGuinty and the province have very good reasons to fill the federal void – no, not 14 months from now. - reprinted from The Toronto Star

Region: Ontario^[2]

Tags: funding^[3]

federalism^[4]

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