

# Report reveals split over Ottawa's role in child care [CA] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

Driven by a jump in for-profit spots, the number of new child-care spaces continued to increase in Canada last year, although at a slower rate than earlier this decade, according to a study released yesterday.

However, with the release of the biannual study - Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2008 -one the co-authors faced off against the government department that paid for the report itself, over what role Ottawa should play in child care and early childhood education.

The study found that Canada added 29,791 new child-care spots in 2007-2008, which was down from an average of 50,831 new spots per year between 2001 and 2004. About 20 per cent of children age 5 or younger in Canada have a regulated childcare spot available to them, it said.

About 25 per cent of spaces were for-profit last year, up from 21 per cent two years earlier.

Martha Friendly, who founded the CRRU and is one of five study co-authors, said the study also notes "huge" differences in policy between provinces, which are responsible for child care in Canada.

As such, Ms. Friendly said, she believes a federal approach would work best in co-ordinating early childhood education and child care policies across all provinces, while still allowing a measure of choice and variation depending on a child's parents or region.

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That drew a rebuff from the office of Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills and Development, who is in charge of federal child-care policy. Her department paid for the CRRU study.

"Our Conservative government believes Canadian parents know what's best for their kids - not a one-size-fits-all model in child-care," Mrs. Finley's spokesman, Ryan Sparrow, said in an e-mail, citing \$250-million in transfer payments to provinces and the \$100-a-month Universal Child Care Benefit for children under age 6, which was introduced by the Conservatives in 2006.

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- reprinted from the Globe and Mail

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