

Letter to the editor re: Stony Day Care closure ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

In 2006, a central platform of the federal Liberal party's agenda was to establish a system of universal child care.

Although noble in their efforts, the Liberal party was defeated and the incumbent Conservative party did not share their vision of a universal child-care policy.

Rather, an intricate system of tax incentives was introduced, which did little, if anything, to benefit low-income families who need these supports.

In 2008, the UNICEF Innocenti Report Card revealed that Canada failed to meet nine out of 10 benchmarks for ensuring that children achieve the best possible start in life through education and support programs.

Some of these benchmarks included: accredited daycare staff with proper post-secondary qualifications, entitlement to parental leave at 50 per cent of salary for one year, a national plan with priority for disadvantaged children and public funding for children under six years at one per cent of GDP.

The report also noted that about 80 per cent of children in developed countries aged three to six are in some form of care or early childhood education outside of their home, which reflects a "revolution" in child rearing practices.

Now, recent revelations of practices at Stony Day Care in Stony Plain have served as a catalyst for a monumental change in ideology for the provincial Conservatives.

Much like their federal counterparts, provincial Tory policies are grounded in free will, determinism and individually focused policy. However, a welcome call for universal (or at least regulated) child care has emerged.

It is regrettable that disconcerting actions directed at the most vulnerable in society need to be exemplars for initiating change.

As children are the future, modelling caring behaviours at a young age in all environments is integral to how they develop into helping, moral citizens who will contribute to society in positive ways.

Our treatment of children, how we model behaviour, and our ability to attentively listen to their needs is imperative in shaping their affective development.

It is an upstream approach to possibly preventing behaviours such as bullying and disrespect for others, challenges which have tragic consequences for both individuals and society.

As women's roles have evolved from domestic to paid work outside of the home, it is essential that their traditional involvement in shaping childhood development, especially through the modelling of caring, be recognized as fundamental to societal development.

Re-envisioning the possibility of a universal child-care program, together with acknowledging that child rearing roles (whether in, or outside of the home) require intellect, compassion and genuine regard for others, will hopefully lead to making the world a better place.

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Region: Alberta ^[2]

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