

Throne Speech slams the door on national child care program ^[1]

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It is news to Canadian families that Stephen Harper's government has delivered on child care, say child care advocates responding to tonight's Throne Speech. "Any parent knows that a \$100 monthly voucher doesn't create child care and without child care there is no choice," says Morna Ballantyne of the advocacy group Code Blue for Child Care. "Harper's claim is particularly misleading given that the Tories have not delivered a single one of the 125,000 child care spaces they promised." The Throne Speech signals the Tories' intention to strip Government of the legislative and financial levers to protect and expand social programs. "Redirected to child care the proposed 1% cut to the GST would provide every child in Canada between 3 and 6 with a full time child care space," said Ballantyne. Harper's plan to legislate limits to the federal spending power demonstrates his continued hostility to social programs; a hostility he championed as head of the National Citizen's Coalition and demonstrated when in his first act as Prime Minister he cancelled the child care plan negotiated with the provinces," said Ballantyne. "The federal spending power is the Constitutional mechanism that gave us Medicare. It is the only tool the Government of Canada has to launch a pan-Canadian child care program." The Tories are misusing Quebecers' desire to control their own social institutions to cover their actions, says Jody Dallaire, Chairperson of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. "But Parliament has all the practical tools it requires to both protect and expand social programs while respecting Quebec's distinct status." Bill 303, The Early Learning and Child Care Act, scheduled before Parliament this session does just that. It places conditions on provinces and territories that receive federal funding for child care but it also explicitly recognizes Quebec's right to set its own standards. "Quebec's needs can be addressed without imposing on all Canadians a measure that makes sense only for Quebec," says Dallaire. Ottawa last used its spending power for child care in 2005 when the then Liberal government signed bi-lateral agreements with the provinces on condition they report regularly and direct the money to regulated child care services. "Ottawa's ability to set conditions on the funding it makes available for social programs ensures that Canadians from coast to coast to coast enjoy the same fundamental social rights," said Dallaire.

Region: Canada ^[2]

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