

Let parents, not ideology, choose daycare for their children ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

With a shortage of regulated daycare spaces frequently declared to be one of the most pressing public-policy issues in the country - estimates put the gap at up to 165,000 spaces - one might think the appearance of a new and energetic operator of daycares would be cause for widespread celebration.

And yet the entry of the Alberta-based child care firm Edleun Group Inc. into Ontario this week has been met with hand-wringing from public sector unions and various child-care advocates. Chief among the complaints is that there's something unseemly or contradictory about looking after kids for a buck. "Any money that is considered profit is money that is not spent on children," Martha Friendly, the executive director of the Toronto-based Childcare Resource and Research Unit, told The Globe this week. This sort of concern is overdone.

There's no inherent contradiction between providing a good or necessary service and earning a profit. Where is the outcry, for instance, over for-profit nursing homes? Surely care for seniors is just as important and sensitive as care at the other end of the age range. It is also the case that regulations are identical for both non-profit and for-profit child-care operators. If we trust public oversight of non-profit daycares run by the YMCA and other charitable organizations, there should be no debate over the existence of similarly regulated for-profit operations. The alarms raised against for-profit daycare seem ideological, rather than practical.

...

It is parents, of course, who must be considered the true judges of child care. The success or failure of any new private-sector daycare should ultimately depend on its ability to satisfy parents, not its ideological foes.

-reprinted from the Globe and Mail

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