

# For-profit daycare growing in Canada, report shows <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

For-profit daycare continues to expand at a time when few new child care spaces are opening across the country, according to the latest national survey of early childhood care and education.

More than 28 per cent of all child care spaces in Canada were run by for-profit operators in 2010, up from 20 per cent in 2004, says the report by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, being released Wednesday - the 7th anniversary of the Harper government's move to tear up a \$5 billion national child care plan.

The trend, which accelerated between 2008 and 2010, is a concern because volumes of international research show for-profit child care tends to be poorer quality than public and non-profit programs, said the report's author Martha Friendly.

"Canada is one of the very few English-speaking countries that isn't dominated by big commercial child-care chains," Friendly said in an interview. "But without national or provincial policy in this area, chains will become the norm here, too."

Of almost 800,000 regulated child care spots for children from birth to age 12, almost 220,000 were run by private businesses in 2010, says Friendly's report. These businesses receive public funding in every province and territory except Saskatchewan.

The report comes in the wake of a new NFB documentary on feminism in Canada, that notes child care remains one of the key barriers to women's equality in this country.

Stephen Harper's Conservative government replaced the \$5 billion national child care program in 2006 with the Universal Child Care Benefit, which to date has cost about \$15 billion.

But the \$100-a-month payment to families for each child under age 6 has not created a single new child care space, notes the Canadian Child Care Advocacy Association.

At a time when just 20 per cent of children under age 12 have access to regulated daycare, the association is calling on the federal auditor general to investigate the government's stewardship of the funds. More than three-quarters of Canadian mothers with young children work outside the home.

-reprinted from the Toronto Star

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