

Letter: Universal daycare must be priority ^[1]

Letter to the Editor

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Excerpts

Re: Unlicensed daycare deaths not tracked by the province, Feb. 28 ^[2]

It's shameful in a modern society that children are dying in unlicensed daycare centres. I blame Prime Minister Stephen Harper who, immediately upon forming a government, dismantled Paul Martin's national child-care program that had been endorsed by all 10 provinces. Harper told parents to fend for themselves, offering monthly subsidies that don't begin to cover the actual cost of proper child care. Did he really not foresee that this would lead to the use of substandard daycare facilities?

Working parents have grim choices when it comes to child care. There are far too few regulated, quality daycare facilities available and the monthly costs are a heavy burden for most and completely out of reach for many.

What are working parents to do when they can't find an opening in a conveniently located regulated facility or simply can't afford to pay the costs on their meager wages? A neighbour looking after several children in the same apartment building must seem like a Godsend; yet we demonize these untrained caregivers as if they're cutting costs and operating out of pure greed.

It took 25 years for the federal government and the provinces to reach consensus on universal child-care and mere months to dismantle it. Universal child-care is a hallmark of a just and caring society. Will Canadians ever get it back? Until we do, more children will die in uncharted facilities.

Ken Ferguson, Toronto

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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