

The dollars and sense of a provincial child care policy ^[1]

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Source: Queen's Park Briefing

Format: Article

Publication Date: 28 Apr 2014

EXCERPTS

Ontario's Tories have weighed in on just about every economic and social issue imaginable, from how the province can gain from Alberta's oilsands to the need to facilitate adoptions - and, of course, that old Conservative chestnut, cutting the size of government.

But in the raft of Progressive Conservative policy papers that have surfaced over the last year, two words are never mentioned even once: child care.

With a spring election in the air, advocates for child care say the matter can't be punted further down the line while waiting for a budget surplus to materialize. Economists and academics also agree the long-term gains of expanding child care far outweigh short-term costs.

Yet nobody wants to talk about it.

It's not just Tory leader Tim Hudak who has said that Ontario can't start thinking about investing in new programs until the books are balanced and the economy recovers.

Even the New Democrats and Andrea Horwath have barely touched the child care file, except to lambaste the government for deaths in unregulated day care, call for yet another ombudsman investigation and press support when individual MPPs face specific child care issues in their constituencies.

The governing Liberals have tinkered around the edges, but Premier Kathleen Wynne hasn't promised any expansion of the system or offered a coherent plan.

Education Minister Liz Sandals has tabled Bill 143, Child Care Modernization Act needed update to laws that haven't been reviewed in decades. She has promised \$296 million over two years to boost wages of early childhood educators and child care workers.

...

"This is too complicated an area to continue doing piecemeal," said Martha Friendly, executive director of the Childcare Resources and Research Unit. "Ontario really needs to have a comprehensive policy framework."

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Region: Ontario ^[2]

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