

Parents frustrated over lack of child care spaces

In 2006, the Conservative government cancelled the early learning and child care agreements reached between the previous Liberal government and all ten provinces and the three territories to create a truly national, quality, affordable, early learning and child care program.

The funding was already flowing to provinces and child care spaces were being built – then the funding was cut. Spaces remained unfinished, waiting lists continued to grow, and parents became more frustrated.

Three years later, matters are even worse. Parents cannot find child care spaces. If they happen to find one, it is far too expensive or not nearby, and therefore not workable. In the end, parents are forced to either give up their jobs or take part-time jobs at reduced wages in order to care for their children.



The Conservative government's stimulus money for infrastructure could be spent on building new early learning and child care centres, training new teachers, and creating more jobs. Instead it is held up in Ottawa, mired in red tape, and will only be spent on physical infrastructure rather than social infrastructure.

Having “choice” in child care means spaces should be available if you choose to put your child in an early learning and child care facility. The Conservative's \$100 per month (\$50 after taxes) does not offer choice if there are no spaces.

What happens to the single parent who has to work in order to pay his or her bills? What does he or she do if there is not a quality, affordable space available? What happens if he or she becomes unemployed?

That person ends up having to take a lower-wage, part-time job, leave the workforce altogether, or find some place to leave his or her child, which may not be reputable or safe. If a parent becomes unemployed then he or she could lose the child care space and could no longer access retraining or find a new job.

The national program was meant for all children regardless of whether parents were working or not because the early learning and child care is about the development of the child. It is more than “daycare”, it is a program to help children in their early years as many studies have indicated that this is the time where a child's brain develops the most. In Ontario, this is called the “Best Start Program”.

Many new Canadians are faced with very difficult decisions when it comes to the care of their children. With the lack of spaces available and the enormous expense if they do find a space, some new Canadians are forced to send their children back to live with

family in their home country until they reach the age of 5 to go to school. This places extreme pressure on the child, who begins his or her life not knowing his or her parents, and for the parents who miss out on the first 5 years of their child's life.

According to the Toronto Star on May 11, 2009, approximately 2,000 Canadian born children of Chinese parents are sent back to live with family in China until they are of age to start school in Canada. Parents should not be faced with such a heartbreaking decision. This is too high a price for any child or parent to have to pay.

The Liberal Party believes that the Government of Canada has a positive role to play in the lives of Canadians. That is why, in 2000, the previous Liberal government began discussions with the provinces to establish an early learning and child care program. The provinces were not on board, but the Liberal government continued to pressure the provinces and that is how the Ontario Early Years program was established, which services many families in Beaches-East York.

In 2004-2005, the previous Liberal government went a step further to sign early learning and child care agreements with the provinces. The Liberal Party will re-establish those agreements under a new Liberal government. The Conservative \$50 per month will stay as income support, but it is not child care, it is not choice, it does not build quality, affordable early learning and child care spaces.