



Quebec daycare taking a toll on kids

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This week three well-respected, award-winning economists released new longitudinal research tracking the toll Quebec's daycare system is taking on children.

The study found that exposure to Quebec daycare increases problem behaviors, like aggression and anxiety and worse - criminality, particularly for boys. For girls, there is a decrease in altruism. There are lower levels of health and wellness.

All this at great taxpayer cost. Billions annually are never enough.

This comes as no great surprise to those who follow daycare research.

Take the first installment of the study published in 2008, which said, "[w]e uncover striking evidence that children are worse off in a variety of behavioral and health dimensions....[Quebec's] new childcare program led to more hostile, less consistent parenting, worse parental health, and lower-quality parental relationships."

In spite of the billions of dollars spent, the greatest hidden cost of government daycare is to the very children and parents it intends to serve.

Government daycare doesn't need more money, it needs to get out of the business entirely.

There are much better ways to fund families. In Finland, for example, there is government daycare but also the equivalent of 500 Canadian dollars per month, per child after maternity leave is over, up until a child turns three. There are payments for parents until children go to school at age six, provided there is a child under three in the home as well.

It is a simple recognition that it is unfair for government to identify one form of childcare as good for everyone by subsidizing it.

If the government pays for something, anything at all—it increases demand for that service regardless of needs or wants.

Parents ought never feel compelled to use the one subsidized system on offer.

But this is exactly what has happened in Quebec where families are under pressure.

One Montreal area mom reports about a friend who wanted to be with her kids instead of putting them in daycare: “she had to face her entire family who could not understand why she wouldn't ‘pull her weight.’... Many parents leave their older child in daycare even when on maternity leave with a littler one. That's the norm here.”

It's also what has happened in Sweden—a country farther gone with a national daycare program and no support from government for any other parental choice. Swedish parents are losing their parental instincts. They now feel the “experts” can do it better.

In matters related to raising a child, there is only one expert: The nearest and dearest kin to that child.

(Government “experts” have motivations that have nothing to do with children. These include increasing the tax base, by drawing parents of young children into the workforce.)

Developmental psychologists are unified in their concern that age one is too early to send children into the world.

In the words of one developmental psychologist, Vancouver-based Dr. Gordon Neufeld, it is in the first six years of life that the capacity for healthy relationships unfolds. He says: “the first issue is always to establish strong, deep emotional connections with those who are raising you. And that should be our emphasis in society. If we did this, we would send our children to school late, not early.”

The well-researched writing is on the wall. The question is: Will we listen?

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