

## **PART 2 – THE REAL NEEDS & WISHES OF FAMILIES**

- DAYCARE USE
- PARENTAL PREFERENCES
- FAMILY NEEDS

The small but disproportionately vocal group of people ideologically pre-disposed to having all mothers of young children out working and all little kids in government daycare have manipulated facts to sell the public on the need for 'more childcare'. Skewing public opinion in this way is not helpful as it prevents us from developing programs for families that they can truly benefit from.

**Here are the facts:**

### **Daycare use:**

While the public has been led to believe that the vast majority of little kids are languishing in crummy 'private' childcare arrangements and therefore the government needs to rush in and provide families with 'high-quality' childcare, the real numbers convey an entirely different picture.

The most recent data by Statistics Canada reports that **only 14.9 % of children age 6 months to 5 years** were in daycare centres full or part-time. In Ontario, the percentage is even less – **11.2%**.

**Almost half (46%)** of all children under the age of 6 are exclusively cared for by their parents. The other half is cared for full or part-time by close family members, trusted friends and neighbourhood home care arrangements.

### **Parental preferences:**

The above information matches closely with parental preferences. Many, if not most 'childcare polling' is skewed to get the answers those paying for the polls want to receive. And, most only ask 'yes-or-no' questions regarding whether or not respondents 'like' a proposed program.

Two surveys – perhaps the only two – which were neutrally administered and which asked for 'preferences' indicate clearly that parents prefer to have resources directed toward themselves so that they can A. provide care for their own children and / or B. pick the kind of care that best suits their family's needs.

Poll One: The **Vanier Institute of the Family** (ideologically neutral) polling indicates that 9 out of 10 Canadians give the following ranking regarding their preference for who should care for young children:

1. Parents
2. Grandparents
3. Family relative
4. Home care centre
5. A daycare centre

[http://www.vifamily.ca/library/future/future\\_toc.html](http://www.vifamily.ca/library/future/future_toc.html) section 5

Poll two: The May 2003 **Compas Election Poll**: This is the only poll in Ontario that clearly gave Ontarians a choice as to care options. When asked:

“Which of the following opinions is closer to your own: Governments should give money to daycare so that it costs less **or** governments should give money to parents so that parents can better afford whatever care they themselves decided is best for their own children?”

**54% of Ontarians** said money should go to parents and **only 35%** wanted the money to go to daycare. Even those who vote NDP favoured (50% to 48%) money going to parents.

(Poll: <http://www.compas.ca/data/030521-GlobalOnProvElection-E.pdf>, page 17)

### **Family needs:**

Again, the public has been lead to believe that most families with young children have both parents working outside the home, and therefore are in need of more daycare. This is false. We hear that ‘70% of mothers of young children are in the labour force’ but ‘labour force’ includes:

- Those on paid and unpaid (and indefinite) leave.
- Doing any amount of paid work – even a few hours a week from home.
- Those who are ‘unemployed’ – ie/ who say they are not working but looking for work (again, perhaps indefinitely)
- Those who work in a family business
- Those who care for other children so that they can care for their own
- Those who work sporadically, on the night shift or on short-term contracts.

Obviously all of the above do not need or want full-time daycare. Nor do the families where mothers ‘work’ and fathers or extended family members provide care.

It is estimated that only a very small minority of families with young children have both parents (or a single parent) working full-time Monday to Friday from 9 to 5. All research shows this is due to preference not the much-hyped ‘lack of childcare’. It must be pointed out that by providing a ‘one-size-fits-all, 9-to5’ daycare system, parents’ access to – and choices for – care will be severely curtailed as all government funding goes toward that model and not the multitude of care choices that parents are currently using and say they prefer.