

FEDERAL ELECTION 2008

Early Learning and Child Care Key to Canada's Economic Future



Parents need affordable and available child care to work, attend school or volunteer in our communities. In two-parent families, 71% of women are in the workforce. 83% of single parents are in the workforce.

Early Learning and Child Care is good for kids. It improves health outcomes, sets the foundation for lifelong learning and reduces costs for social and health services later in life.

Access to child care fuels the economy but it also helps pay for itself through higher tax revenues from working parents.

The Federal Government has a crucial role to play in building a child care system in Canada. Canada is last of 14 similar countries in spending on early learning and child care programs according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

What Early Learning and Child Care Needs for the Future

✓ Improving Current Funding and Services

In February 2005 Federal Budget committed \$5 billion over five years to enhance and expand high-quality early learning and child care programs.

When the funding was canceled by the Conservative Government, provinces were allowed to keep the 2006 funding. Many provinces, including Ontario, split that money into four to sustain the existing child care system. In 2010, that money runs out.

Without a continuation of federal funding to child care programs, we risk losing some of our already scarce child care spaces.

✓ Investing in Quality Affordable Child Care

In Ontario, we don't have enough child care and the child care we have is very expensive. The Federal Government has an important role to play in expanded funding for more access and greater affordability. The Federal Government shouldn't turn it's back on Canadian children.

✓ Accountability for Federal Child Care Funding

In a minority government, the opposition actually has more votes than the government. The opposition parties – Liberal, NDP, Bloc Quebecois, don't always see eye-to-eye on fixing Canada's problems. But on one issue – early learning and child care – they joined together. Calling for more accountability for federal funding transferred to the provinces and expansion of child care programs in the not-for-profit child care sector, the opposition parties voted in favour of Bill C-303. Only the Conservative Government voted against the Bill.

Child Care Funding Since 2005

Case Study –

How did the cancellation of the national child care funding affect the fast growing Region of Peel?

With funding committed in the 2005 Federal Budget, the Region of Peel would have received \$95 million dollars.

The funding would have increased the number of child care spaces from 2,085 to 21,153.

In addition to increasing access to subsidies and improving quality and early learning supports.

The February 2005 Federal Budget committed \$5 billion over five years to enhance and expand high-quality early learning and child care programs. One of the first actions of the Conservative Party minority government was to cancel this funding and replace it with a \$1200 annual child care allowance for families with children under 6 years of age.

Those payments have not made child care any more affordable to working families. The “Choice in Child Care” allowance may pay for dance and music classes or food for low-income families, but it isn’t enough to pay for quality child care in any province in Canada.

The Conservative Government also promised 250,000 new child care spaces. Their policies have not led to a single new child care space.

Questions for Candidates

1. Improving Current Funding and Services:

Canada needs a government that is ready to make high quality, affordable child care a reality so parents can work, study and be involved in their communities and children have improved learning and care opportunities.

- **Is your party willing to make a invest of no less than \$1.2 billion annually to address the real need for universal access to affordable, quality child care for all children 0-12?**

2. Investing in Quality – Investing in Public/non-profit:

Study after study has concluded that on average child care delivered in the not-for-profit sector is of much higher quality. We know that small group size; low child-to-adult ratios, continuity in relationships and a well trained and compensated staff produce quality results for children. We know that when profit is the motive these things suffer.

- **Is your party prepared to provide capital funding to build new public and non-profit early learning and child care centres?**

3. Accountability for Federal Child Care Funding:

Federal investment and accountability is critical to creating a consistent service delivery system across Canada. There are few strings attached to the way provinces spend federal investments in social programs. Greater accountability would mean increased wages for the child care workforce; expansion of not-for-profit spaces and lower parent fees.

- **Will your party commit to creating quality measures of accountability for public investments?**

