



Early Learning Childcare Coalition of Saskatchewan

July 30, 2009

Honourable Gordon Campbell
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Campbell:

As Canadian premiers prepare to meet for the Council of the Federation in Regina, Saskatchewan, child care advocacy groups are urging you to make a significant commitment to develop a pan-Canadian child care system; and to make the development of a child care system a priority in your discussions during the Council of the Federation meeting.

Public investment into quality child care will provide an immediate and positive impact on working families, and will also allow for parents to be fully engaged in the workforce. This will have a positive effect on each province's labour force and economy.

In the short term, direct investment in a child care system:

- Provides immediate economic stimulus to communities: child care is labour intensive and early childhood educators usually live, work and buy in their local communities.
- Supports the entire labour force: accessible and affordable child care services allow parents to maintain their labour force attachment and obtain necessary skill development across all sectors of the economy.

In the long term, investments in a child care system:

- Promote positive child development and are an investment in the economy of the future, particularly given our aging population and diminishing labour force.
- Help parents maintain employment, upgrade skills and keep their families out of poverty while supporting their workforce participation, education and training.

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In the Council of the Federation host province, Saskatchewan, there are 185,000 children under 12 years of age, but only 11,000 child care spaces. In a province where 115,000 women are full-time participants in the workforce, there are too many families left without affordable and accessible child care options. Parents across Canada face similar challenges in their respective provinces.

In the current economic environment, the importance of timely infrastructure investments has been widely advanced and acknowledged by both federal and provincial governments. We urge the provincial governments to recognize that early learning and care is a critical part of our national economic and social infrastructure.

Allocating funding for new spaces is not enough to build a system. Provinces must do more to ensure that the infrastructure—both physical and social—is in place; that early learning and child care education programs are properly funded, expanded and updated as necessary; and that recruitment and retention of child care professionals is addressed.

We urge all premiers to demand that the federal government commit significant new federal transfer payments to provinces and territories specifically for direct operating funding for child care programs to lower fees, raise wages and create child care spaces for families who can't find child care, or can't find affordable child care. According to the Fiscal Stimulus Plan prepared by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, transfer payments of \$2.2 billion to provinces and territories for child care that supports public ownership and non-profit operation of facilities and capital expansion is a significant first step to building a child care system for Canada. The terms of the 2003 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Care will continue to apply to these transfer payments, as well as two additional requirements:

1. Commitment to direct operating funding of services, with accountability requirements for access (by expanding the number of quality, inclusive spaces), affordability (by reducing fees) and quality indicators (primarily through professional development and compensation).
2. Commitment to public ownership and non-profit operations of facilities and equipment purchased and upgraded with transfer funds. This is to ensure democratic control of publicly funded assets, and to protect Canadians from having public funds fuel the corporatization of child care as countries like Australia have experienced.

In order to realize the full social and economic returns of this federal investment in child care services, provinces and territories must be held accountable for meeting these goals, and must develop a child care plan with targets, timelines and transparent reporting.

Parents should be provided the opportunity to participate in the economy and the labour force while their children are cared for in a safe, quality environment that is affordable for all. Child care services are an essential part of every community's economic and social infrastructure, and present an opportunity for economic stimulus with long-term benefits for all provinces.

Signatories to this letter include:

Early Learning Child Care Coalition of Saskatchewan

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

New Brunswick Child Care Coalition

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

Child Care Coalition of Manitoba

c. All Council of the Federation Provincial and Territorial Premiers