



## **Childcare program puts families before jails and jets**

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OTTAWA-The Liberal federal election pledge to reintroduce a national childcare program will finally put Canada on the road to giving families the support they need during their children's early years, says Code Blue for Child Care.

The Code Blue for Child Care campaign began in 2006 when the newly elected Harper government tore up signed agreements with the provinces, cancelling the national childcare program initiated by Prime Minister Paul Martin. Since then, the group has tracked the growing lack of available and affordable high quality childcare for Canada's families with young children. Regulated childcare covers only about 20% of Canadian 0 -5 year olds, while more than 70% of mothers are in the paid labour force.

"Canada has lost five valuable years that could have been spent building the kind of early learning and childcare system that other countries have", said Shellie Bird, the campaign's coordinator. "We are a rich nation, yet when it comes to giving families the options they need and want for their children, we rank rock bottom in the world."

"We are very encouraged that Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff has chosen to make childcare a prominent issue in this election and has pledged to build a universal high quality program" said Debra Mayer, a Winnipeg childcare expert. "The proposal recognizes this as both the first stage of education for all children and a valuable support for parents, especially working mothers."

Code Blue for Child care is advocating for a universal system of publicly funded, publicly managed high quality childcare. The group is urging political leaders to commit to building such a system by 2020, beginning with an immediate infusion of funds.

"This is not only the right thing to do, for children and for women, but it's also the smart thing to do for our communities and for Canada", said Sue Delanoy, Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, a member of Code Blue. "Good childcare works for everyone in Canada—children, families and communities—because it yields economic and social benefits such as health, lifelong learning, training and employment support, and social cohesion. We hope other parties will also be pledging support to a national childcare system".

Code Blue for Child Care made up of women's, labour, childcare and social justice groups from across Canada.

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