



Federal Election 2011

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & CARE

Harper Conservatives' Record

The Harper Conservative government turned its back on working families and women from the moment they were elected. As his first act in government Harper cancelled the agreements with the provinces for early learning and child care and cut \$1 billion in federal funding.

Before the Conservative government came to power, Canadians were very close to achieving a national child care program. Now, Canada is at the bottom of the heap of all OECD countries (the world's most developed nations) when it comes to investing in early learning and child care.

Without a framework and policy on early childhood education and care, the government set out the welcome mat to large corporations to make profits from desperate parents while there is no plan to make programs accessible, available or affordable.

The Harper Conservatives gave parents a small monthly allowance – and took away the plan to develop services. Canadians prefer a national early learning and child care system to the Harper Conservatives' meagre monthly cheques. Early childhood education and care centres are closing due to a lack of funding, and the profession is losing trained staff because of low wages and poor working conditions.

The Harper Conservatives' lack of vision for early learning and child care fails the millions of Canadian families who cannot afford or find quality, affordable child care spaces for their children.

The Facts

- More than 70 per cent of mothers with children under five are in the paid workforce, yet only about 20 per cent of children in Canada have access to regulated child care spaces. Most parents have to scramble to piece together their child care.
- Aboriginal children do not have adequate access to early learning and child care programs.
- Outside of Quebec, Canadians pay some of the highest child care fees in the world.
- Canada's child care is market-based, not a publicly managed system. This means a combination of high parent fees, low staff wages, unmet demand, and uncertain quality.
- Canadian research shows that every dollar invested in high quality child care programs increases GDP by \$2.30 – far ahead of stimulus from construc-

tion and manufacturing. In the long term every public dollar invested in high quality child care programs returns \$2.45 in economic benefits.

Better Choices

Quality early learning and care services reduces poverty, increases employment, and stimulates the economy. These programs build strong communities.

Our nation's children, women and families deserve better than words without action. They deserve a national program of high quality, accessible early childhood education and child care. Recognizing the right of Quebec to develop social programs, the federal government must make a commitment to legislate the right to universal access to child care. It must provide multi-year secure funding for a national program to the provinces and territories that agree to develop:

- A system of accessible, affordable, high quality, public and not-for-profit early childhood education and care in place.
- A policy framework that includes goals and objectives, targets and timelines,

recognizing provincial and territorial roles and responsibilities.

- A planned program for developing a system of inclusive services that meet the early childhood education and care needs of children and parents through:
 - Public expansion via a publicly-delivered early childhood education and care system. This includes integrating existing community-based services into publicly-managed systems.
 - Public funding to the early childhood education and care system, rather than individual parents, so that high quality, accessible services that parents can afford can be created and sustained.
 - Public monitoring and reporting on quality and access levels in an early childhood education and care system.

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