

A National Child Care Program



Canadians have been asking for a universal, high quality, inclusive system of child care for almost three decades. We were very enthusiastic about the 2004 federal election commitment to create a national early learning and child care program based on the QUAD principles. QUAD stands for: Quality, Universally inclusive, Accessible and Developmental.

It will be important for governments to “get it right from the start”. There is a lot of Canadian and international knowledge about best practices in policy and services that live up to the QUAD principles. One best practice is to make a plan that moves to public and/or not-for-profit delivery of child care services.

There is overwhelming evidence to show that public and not-for-profit delivery is much more likely to:

- deliver high quality programs that support the “early learning” to which a commitment has been made;
- make sure that children with special needs are included;
- make sure services are accountable and stable;
- reduce the risk of trade challenges; and
- make sure that limited public resources go towards quality child care and not profit for private providers.

The Federal government has signed bilateral agreements with several provinces. Except for those with Québec and Manitoba, the signed agreements do not make it clear that public funds will go only into public, not-for-profit child care and not into private, for-profit hands.

We need a commitment to a policy framework that views early learning and child care as public services. Otherwise, parents may continue to have little or no choice when it comes to obtaining high-quality, affordable programs for their infant and pre-school children.

We need the Federal government to:

- enact legislation with supporting agreements outlining service entitlement, standards, quality enhancements, and accountability and leadership responsibilities;
- establish a schedule for federal funding to reach 1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2020;

outline goals and timelines for funding and service provision in 5-year increments over a 15-year period; and support parents to balance work and family responsibilities by enhancing maternity/parental benefits and family responsibility leaves.

Party Positions

Bloc Québécois

Wants to ensure that Ottawa unconditionally transfers funds to Québec in order to maintain a stable, accessible child care program for Quebecers.

Conservative Party

No legislation or support for a national child care program and would cancel existing or pending federal childcare agreements. Will give \$100 per month to parents who have children below the age of six.

Liberal Party

No legislation. Will keep negotiating agreements that state they are based on the QUAD principles but that give provinces the full power to decide where child care funds will go and how child care will be delivered.

New Democratic Party

Would enact legislation that would provide annual program funding and ensure meaningful accountability standards, guarantees and conditions based on quality and accessibility principles and that public money will only go towards “not for profit” delivery.

Ask the candidates

Does your party support legislation that would ensure a public, quality, universally inclusive, accessible and developmental child care program that is based on not-for-profit principles?

