

Child benefit not to be used for childcare ^[1]

Letter to the editor

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

Re: Ottawa can shape the future of work, Editorial Oct. 30

Ottawa can shape the future of work, Editorial Oct. 30

Your editorial's strong support of a strengthened social safety net as part of the solution to support precarious workers is welcomed, especially by the hundreds of thousands of Canadian parents who work one or more short-term or low-paid jobs and still cannot lift themselves above the poverty line.

Indeed, nearly 1 in 3 low income children had at least one parent who worked the equivalent of full time. For these families, the Canada Child Benefit is essential support which helps to reduce hunger and balance the monthly income and expenses.

It's a mistake, however, to expect families to use the Canada Child Benefit to pay for childcare services. To begin with, far too few parents can find suitable, convenient childcare services. Today's parents face high childcare fees while also paying down student loans and high housing costs.

The CCB, as helpful as it is, is not enough to pay for childcare. Low and modest income families need both the child benefit and the availability of high quality, affordable childcare that they can find in their communities as they pursue training and/or employment in an effort to become economically stable.

All other industrialized countries that have significantly reduced child poverty to below 5 per cent have also developed well-resourced systems of early childhood education and care services. Canada must act expeditiously to do the same.

Laurel Rothman, Campaign 2000: End Child Poverty Steering Committee, Toronto

The Star's editorial advice about strengthening Canada's social safety net as part of shaping the future of decent work is absolutely right. Your recommendation to "Do more for parents" points the federal government to the "universal, quality, affordable childcare system" young families desperately need.

A recent OECD report on disaffected youth calls out lack of affordable childcare as keeping young women out of the workforce and shows Canadian childcare fees as among the world's highest.

As this echoes homegrown evidence and experience, it's not a surprise that universal childcare was among the challenges to the Prime Minister at last week's Canadian Labour Congress Youth Forum. All signs are that lack of a serious Canada-wide childcare plan - long a women's equality issue, a poverty issue and an education issue - is also fast becoming a youth issue.

As many young Canadian parents are also those experiencing unaffordable post-secondary education and housing in addition to the "job churn" of precarious employment, it is no wonder.

Martha Friendly, Executive Director, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Toronto

-reprinted from The Toronto Star

Region: Canada ^[3]

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