

Test from Brian ^[1]

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Many Canadian parents know that paying for child care for young children while they go to work is painfully expensive. But do they (and our federal government) know that child care costs in Canada are among the highest in the world?

This not only hurts families, this hurts our children. And it hurts Canada's economy. If the Trudeau government truly wants to help the middle class and women's equality as its party line touts, then it must make higher direct investments in child care.

A new report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives on the rising cost of child care concludes that the typical family with young children spends about a third of its income on fees. To put this into perspective, this is about \$21,096 a year on average in cities like Toronto --- more than triple the average tuition cost to put an older child through university for one year.

The one-third of net income that the typical Canadian family spends on child care is much higher than in other parts of the world. Among 35 wealthy nations, Canada was found by the OECD to be among the most expensive for child care. Only two countries, the United States and Ireland, fare less well than we do.

Helping parents afford this care through a properly funded child-care system might appear to be expensive for society, yet many Canadian studies and reports show that of any policy geared to help struggling families, investments for high-quality child care has the biggest economic payoff for parents and their children.

Investment in child care pays for itself. It has compounding positive effects on women's employment and pay. And it goes even further for low-income families, because it can move generations of children toward increased earnings, better jobs, improved health, more education and decreased criminal activity as adults.

Now imagine if quality child care cost 10 per cent of a family's income at most ó not 30 per cent as is currently reported. This would provide more children with a strong start in life and contribute significantly to the economic security of women and families.

The finance minister's recent increase of the Child Care Benefit -- a tax-free monthly payment made to eligible families to help with the cost of raising children ó does not directly address the rapidly rising cost of child care and early education programs. And it does nothing for the quality and accessibility of child care at all.

Greater and more meaningful investments in child care are required from our government. According to OECD recommendations, Ottawa should be spending 1 per cent of Canada's GDP on child care. Our government currently invests only 0.25 per cent.

By quadrupling our federal investment, we would both make child care more affordable and improve the quality of programs through supporting the education and training of early childhood educators. It would improve pay and benefits to the child care workforce ñ those compassionate people who care lovingly, creatively and professionally for children and who are so instrumental in their development.

It is time for our government to invest adequately in child care and for Canada to stop lagging behind among our international community of wealthy nations. It is time to give our children and families quality, affordable, inclusive and accessible child care so we can all make Canada a better country.

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