

Address by Prime Minister Paul Martin to the Empire Club and Toronto Board of Trade ^[1]

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Speech in html ^[2]

Excerpts from the speech:

Now some of you are probably thinking to yourselves & fine, he says no deficits, but he's been spending too much lately. Martin's lost it! He's gone over to the dark side!

Well let's talk about that. Let's cut through the opposition claims and get to the facts.

A couple weeks ago, I was in Nova Scotia, announcing an agreement with the province on early learning and child care. I looked at the papers the next morning -- Martin continues spending spree! blared the headlines. You'd think I was out there dishing out 20-dollar bills to toddlers & telling them, here, go buy yourself something that squeaks, courtesy of the government of Canada.

Well, let's walk through this. Early learning and child care is one of the priorities we campaigned on last year. The money for it was set aside in the budget -- \$5-billion. And now we're working with provinces and territories of all political stripes to invest that money and build the national program we promised. So in effect, we're being criticized for honouring our pledge. We're being attacked for doing exactly what we said we'd do. I've been in politics awhile, and I'm used to being criticized. But this is a new one for me....

I believe that the federal government owes a duty to contribute to a culture of learning that goes beyond our current support of post-secondary education, that goes to the heart of when learning begins.

Understand we are not just talking about child care. The focus here is on development, on giving children a leg up. That means each child will get a better start and a better chance of thriving in the later years of school and in life. Quite simply, it is the right thing to do for our kids. And it's the right thing to do for our country. Indeed, the Bank of Canada has called early learning the single most important investment that we as a nation can make in our own future.

The market for high-quality jobs is increasingly global, and the competition is increasingly intense. We have got to stay ahead of the curve. That is why we're placing such a high priority on early learning, and that is also why we're increasing our support for post-secondary education. These are investments in our collective future.

Region: Canada ^[3]

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