

Childcare is still crucial for women's participation in the workforce ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

On the evening of June 7th, Ontario voted in a majority Progressive Conservative government with Doug Ford as Premier. For many supporters of affordable childcare, the \$15 minimum wage, and accessible pharma and dental care, the election of Premier-elect Ford left them questioning the possibility on their causes.

For many it seemed like a missed opportunity – Ontario could finally have and reap the benefits of an affordable childcare plan similar to Quebec.

A couple of months ago I was invited to speak to a large group of fifth graders. I spoke about the provincial election and asked the group why it was important for their parents to have access to childcare – many responded so both their parents to go to work. When I asked if they thought it was a women's issue – one astute student raised her hand and said that “most moms stay at home so it isn't fair to women.”

There you have it – ten year olds who believe that the responsibility of taking care of children often falls on mothers and recognize the importance of childcare for their moms to go to work.

This fifth grader's answer happens to be backed up by data. Research shows affordable childcare leads to a dramatic increase in women in the workforce. For instance, once Quebec adopted subsidized universal childcare for all ages in 1997, women's participation raised from 3% lower than the national average to 3% higher than the national average by 2014. Not only did the program pay for itself due to the increase in income, payroll, and other taxes, but studies revealed both provincial and federal governments are receiving more than a 100% of the program's cost.

As of now, the median cost for infant or toddler childcare in Toronto is \$36,000 per year – a price unaffordable for families of most economic backgrounds. The PC plan offers a rebate covering up to \$6,750 per child and does nothing to address the lack of spaces available. Often parents have to spend months on a waitlist to find appropriate daycare or travel far outside their neighbourhoods to access a space.

The incoming Ford government is going to be a setback for childcare advocates. However, the NDP as the official opposition can attempt to pass progressive childcare bills if they work alongside organizations like the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care.

Moving forward, we must not take this setback as a reason to give up for the next four years. We must organize alongside our neighbours, families, and friends to lobby for programs that will make our province more equal. We must write and call our MPPs, regardless of party affiliation, to make it known that we demand gender equity. Childcare is not a luxury – women cannot wait another four years to afford and access childcare.

Related link:

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/18/07/childcare-still-crucial-women%E2%80%99s-participation-workforce>

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