

# Investments in child care are investments in women's equality <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

We've all heard the stories of women struggling due to a lack of affordable child care. I've heard stories of women in my community who have been forced out of the workforce due to a lack of affordable options. Stories of mothers struggling to make ends meet due to high child care costs. Stories of women choosing between having a family and having a career, when in many cases what they want is both.

Sarah\* a young mother of twin boys living in Comox, recently reached out to share her own personal child care story with me. In spite of months of searching for affordable child care, when Sarah's maternity leave ended she was unable to find child care spaces for her sons – there were simply no spaces available. Sarah's choices were incredibly limited—if she wanted to go back to work, she would have to hire a nanny to care for her sons. But the costs of hiring a full-time nanny were so high that staying home without income actually cost Sarah less than paying for child care. For Sarah, working full-time was simply not feasible, solely because the associated child care costs were so high.

When child care is unaffordable, families are forced to make incredible sacrifices to ensure their children are cared for. And the numbers show us that even in 2020, the biggest burdens of unaffordable child care often fall squarely on the shoulders of women.

When child care is unaffordable, the cost can add up to the same, or even more, than what a second parent would earn in the workforce. On average women still earn lower annual salaries than men, so when child care is unaffordable it is most often women who are forced to leave the workforce, rather than pay for child care they simply cannot afford.

Our government supports families to make the choices that work for them when it comes to choosing to access child care or have a parent stay at home to care for children. But it is crucial that these choices are just that: choices. And it is crucial that families have real options when it comes to child care in B.C.

Under the previous Liberal government, child care costs skyrocketed, creating a crisis of affordability and a shortage of accessible, quality child care spaces across the province. The BC Liberals treated child care as a luxury and took no action to support families struggling to afford it. The BC Liberal child care critic event went so far as to suggest that child care isn't needed.

Unlike the BC Liberals, our New Democrat government understands the impact affordable child care has on women's equality—it is a fundamental building block of a society and economy that creates opportunities for women to participate fully and equally in the workforce.

Access to affordable, quality child care has an incredible impact on women's economic security. Single parents, the majority of whom are single mothers, often find themselves in impossible situations when they lack access to affordable child care. 16 years of Liberal inaction has led us to a time where child care can be so expensive that for single mothers, it often costs less to rely on social assistance than it does to pay for child care, which forces women out of the workforce and makes them even more economically precarious.

Access to affordable, quality child care helps women develop their careers. When women are forced to leave the workforce due to a lack of child care, they lose out on the work experience, career development and professional connections that come from time spent at work. And when the mental burden of worrying about where or how children will be cared for is lifted, all parents have more time and energy to focus on other aspects of their lives, like their careers.

Women of every income level and family composition have been impacted deeply by the Liberal legacy of unaffordable childcare, but our government is making different choices to make quality child care more affordable, and more accessible. We've made record-breaking investments that have allowed us to create over 10,000 new child care spaces. We are creating more training spaces for Early Childhood Educators to ensure those caring for our children have access to the training they need, and we've invested over \$630 million toward making child care more affordable for parents in B.C.

Recently Sarah, the Comox mother of twin boys, got in touch with me again. Sarah recently started a full-time job in her chosen field after enrolling her sons in a \$10 a day child care prototype site that was opened in her community and wrote to me to let me know the ways having access to child care has impacted her and her family. Sarah wrote:

"I'm so thrilled to finally have child care for my family. I just wanted to send a note to let you all know what an incredible difference this

continues to make in our family's life and to thank you for working so hard for families like mine!"

We know there is more to be done, but we're making choices that put people first. As we work toward our goal of building a universal childcare system in B.C., we know each step we take brings us closer to a province where all women have true choices when it comes to how they participate in the workforce, develop their careers, and raise their families.

**Related link:**

**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** investment <sup>[4]</sup>

women's equality <sup>[5]</sup>

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