

# Without more support for child care, economic recovery will be slow, says expert <sup>[1]</sup>

'No recovery without a she-covetry, no she-covetry without child care,' says Armine Yalnizyan

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## EXCERPTS

As the gears of the economy begin to spin again, one expert is warning that without more support for child care, a major group could be left out of the recovery: women.

Economist Armine Yalnizyan said we need an economic "she-covetry" — one that focuses on getting women back to work and increasing child-care support for working parents.

"No recovery without a she-covetry, no she-covetry without child care," she told The Current's Matt Galloway.

When it comes to COVID-19-related job losses, women outnumber men — from February to April employment fell by 16.9 per cent for women, compared to 14.6 per cent for men, according to Statistics Canada.

More than two million Canadians were without work in April, and unlike in previous recessions, workers in retail and services sectors which employ greater numbers of women are particularly hard hit.

But with access to child care only beginning to return — and the number of child-care spaces shrinking due to physical distancing precautions — getting women back to work could be tricky.

That's something Kelsey Collette understands well. The Saint John woman said that she lost her job as a legal assistant during the pandemic.

"I did what most mothers had to do.... I had to call my employer and let him know that my hands were tied, and, unfortunately, I wasn't physically able to go into the office," she told Galloway, explaining she offered to work from home following the closure of her children's daycare.

"I was told no worries and to take care of my family."

### 'It's extremely stressful'

But a month later, when she spoke with her boss about a back-to-work plan, she said she was told a new employee was hired in her place and that there was no position for her to return to.

Now, with mortgage payments looming — and no room for her son at his former daycare — Collette said she's struggling to plan for the future.

"Do I find a job first? Do I find child care? How do I do one without the other? So it's extremely stressful," she said.

Yalnizyan said it's crucial child care is addressed by the government.

"This issue of child care is this generation's medicare story, and we've got to get it done," she said.

### Avoid reversing gains for women in workforce

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recognized concerns around child care earlier this month during his daily COVID-19 update.

"The importance of child care has been yet again emphasized," he said. "There needs to be more and secure child-care spaces for people to get back in the workforce."

But according to Yalnizyan, the connection between caregiving and keeping business running is often ignored.

With COVID-19 upending everything from the restaurant business to long-term care, she hopes that could change.

"We have had the veil lifted on what is the essential economy — and what the essential economy is, it is propped up by the caring

economy," she said.

"You can't do it without high-quality care so that you're not worried about 'Are your kids going to get sick at school, or is your parent going to die because they're not fed in the long-term care facility?'"

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### **Government needs to step up**

While women have long talked about the connection between child care and the economy, only now is the government starting to hear it, Yalnizyan said.

"We're coming up on the 50th anniversary of the report on the Royal Commission on the Status of Women," she said.

"We've been talking about this for half a century — about how high-quality child care is an essential feature for women to have children — to be able to reach their full potential in the economy."

Without a plan for a low-cost or free child care, Yalnizyan said that women could once again fall behind — and the government needs to step up to the plate.

"How they respond to it ... is the chapter that is yet unwritten in this pandemic."

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