

Open letter to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Canada: There is no time like the present to build a pan-Canadian system of child care ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Deputy Prime Minister Freeland:

We congratulate you for arriving at a Safe Restart agreement with Canada's provincial/ territorial First Ministers to help "make our country more resilient."

The earmarked spending on child care is an important indication of the federal government's understanding that economic recovery depends on meeting the child care needs of parents with young children, especially mothers. We remain hopeful that the agreement's provision for child care, amounting to only 3 per cent of more than \$19 billion in new federal transfers, does not signal that child care is a low government priority, or that it reflects a misunderstanding of the extent of Canada's child care crisis. Thus, we stress the importance of further, bolder federal government action going forward.

Now is the time to lay the groundwork for the construction of a system of child care, as you promised Canadians in the last federal election. You and other federal ministers have publicly acknowledged the importance and centrality of child care. In fact, the pandemic experience has made it clear to all that child care is essential in bad times and good.

What is required now is for the federal government to fund and expand child care as a principal piece of Canada's social infrastructure going forward.

The signatories to this open letter urge you to move quickly to establish a federal secretariat on child care that can guide the building of a robust system of high quality, accessible, affordable, inclusive child care that has the wellbeing of children and child care staff at its centre and that, at the same time, supports parents—particularly mothers—to re-enter and stay in the paid labour force. We also urge that the establishment and expansion of a child care system for Canada, and the ongoing implementation of the Indigenous early learning and child care framework agreement, be funded as a priority in your government's short and long-term federal budget plans beginning this year.

The pandemic has had devastating consequences for women's equality and economic security, family functioning, children's wellbeing, and the health of the economy. Key to recovery is child care. You have said it. Many have said it. We say it. Now it is time to turn words into action.

Yours sincerely,

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