

Open letter to Finance Minister Freeland ^[1]

Author: Harney, Susan

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EXCERPTS

On behalf of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Finance. As Government prepares for the Throne Speech and your first Federal Budget, we are writing to highlight that it is imperative you prioritize and invest substantially in high quality, affordable child care.

This is particularly important for women, as they have been disproportionately impacted by the crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the social and economic costs associated with longstanding and intersecting structural inequities in Canada, and the importance of a feminist recovery.

The successes achieved to date in implementing the \$10aDay Child Care Plan in BC demonstrates that significant federal/provincial/territorial child care investments, with accountability, will advance an inclusive, equitable, green and broadly-supported economic recovery Canada-wide.

In 2011, we partnered with the Early Childhood Educators of BC to develop the \$10aDay Child Care Plan. Since that time, we have built broad public and political support for the Plan. We have also endorsed the national Affordable Child Care for All Plan, which is an example of how a national approach can be implemented provincially.

Child care was a key issue in the 2017 provincial election and Premier John Horgan acknowledged that his commitment to building a quality, universal child care system helped him form government.

Based on the \$10aDay Plan, BC has reduced parent fees, created new licensed spaces, introduced wage enhancements for educators and affirmed support for Indigenous-led child care.

While all of these steps are important, the \$10aDay Prototype sites - funded through the Bilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement - generated the most excitement and interest province-wide. Families now paying no more than \$10/day describe this concrete, meaningful action as life-changing.

Child care was also a key issue for BC in the recent federal election. A 2019 poll shows that 90% of British Columbians – across all ages, regions and political allegiances – support public investments in a quality, affordable system. And, almost two-thirds of parents with child care experience say current government investments are having a positive impact on their child care situation.

Yet, British Columbians also know that there is much more to do. The same poll, conducted before the pandemic, showed that child care still puts a financial strain on 76% of families and 70% say a parent had to remain away from work longer after parental leave because child care was unavailable. These results are not surprising as there are still only enough licensed spaces for about 20% of children in BC, and families are often paying more than \$1,000/month for full-time care - even with the provincial fee reductions in place.

No wonder most British Columbians (76 per cent) said government should move more quickly to achieve the \$10aDay Plan goals.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the necessity of immediate action with front-loaded investment, confirming what we have long known – child care is an essential service for families and our economy. Expanding access to child care also supports Canada's transition to a green economy because care work is climate sustaining, as are public infrastructure investments in local, green child care facilities (accessible by walking, biking and public transit).

By now, you have received hundreds of email messages from \$10aDay supporters, calling on the federal government to support the BC government in accelerating implementation of the \$10aDay Plan by:

1. Moving all licensed child care services to a maximum fee of \$10aDay.
2. Implementing a competitive provincial wide wage grid for early childhood educators.
3. Expanding publicly-owned child care facilities through infrastructure investments.

Minister Freeland, this is a historic opportunity for you to be the right person in the right place at the right time to remove this decades-

long barrier to gender equity in Canada. From coast to coast to coast, women are counting on you to make child care central to Canada's economic and social recovery.

While child care is under provincial jurisdiction, Canada will not recover from the pandemic without federal investment and leadership. Like so many others across the country we look forward to a significant child care commitment in the upcoming Throne Speech and Federal Budget, as part of a feminist recovery agenda. We also welcome the opportunity to discuss our recommendations in more detail, and can be contacted at info@cccabc.bc.ca [3].

Region: British Columbia [4]

Tags: economics [5]
advocacy [6]

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