

# Universal child care would cure many social ills <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

You will often hear someone say: “I’m socially liberal but fiscally conservative.” What does that mean, exactly?

For me, it translates into: I care about people, but not enough to see them cared for at a systemic level. Those espousing this somewhat sanctimonious political view are often privileged enough to be far removed from the social problems they purport to care about but don’t support funding.

Although Canada is a wonderful place to call home, it isn’t a utopia. Issues to do with homelessness and racial discrimination plague us — especially against Indigenous peoples; the number of missing and murdered Indigenous girls and women has been labelled a genocide — and are in dire need of careful attention and dollars. It’s important to also shine a bright light on violence against all women.

Oh, and there is that niggling little matter of the wage gap between women and men.

Issues like the gendered wage gap put one’s liberalism and conservatism at odds. Women are graduating from university at a slightly higher rate than men. However, according to Statistics Canada, the average full-time woman makes 87 cents to every dollar a man makes, and the discrepancy grows if you are a racialized woman (67 cents), Indigenous woman (65 cents), or woman living with a disability (54 cents). Between 20 to 30 per cent of single-parent families are headed by women living in poverty.

It’s a problem that affects all provinces to varying degrees, with Newfoundland and Labrador and Alberta being the worst offenders. We should be ashamed that our country, according to the Conference Board of Canada, rates 13th among 16 peer countries that includes several European countries, Japan and the U.S.

Universal child care would go a long way in solving the wage gap. Families, children and the community would also stand to greatly benefit from women’s contributions in the public realm. It’s a solution that has been thrown around since the ’70s, and we’ve yet to create a countrywide early learning and child care system.

The average child care spot in Toronto costs \$1,685 while one in Montreal is \$175 (Quebec has its own system). That’s if daycare spaces are even available.

Without universal access to affordable, high-quality child care, women’s equality will never be realized. When COVID-19 struck and schools shuttered at various times, many women had no choice but to leave the workplace to care for children, and these same women will be imperative to helping Canada recover from this pandemic. That will be impossible if we maintain the status quo.

Canada has many pressing problems to tackle and sympathy will only go so far; social issues are inherently economic. In the case of child care, if fiscal conservatives took the time, they couldn’t argue with the numbers.

**Region:** Canada <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** gender equality <sup>[4]</sup>

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