

Budget 2021: A recovery plan for jobs, growth, and resilience ^[1]

The Government of Canada's plan to finish the fight against COVID-19 – and ensure a resilient economic recovery that creates jobs and growth for Canadians.

Author: Department of Finance

Source: Government of Canada

Format: government document

Publication Date: 19 Apr 2021

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Excerpted from Min. Freeland's address

COVID has brutally exposed something women have long known: Without childcare, parents – usually mothers – can't work. The closing of our schools and daycares drove women's participation in the labour force down to its lowest level in more than two decades. Early learning and child care has long been a feminist issue; COVID has shown us that it is an urgent economic issue, too.

I was two years old when the Royal Commission on the Status of Women urged Canada to establish a universal system of early learning and child care. My mother was one of Canada's redoubtable second wave of feminists who fought – and outside Quebec, failed – to make that recommendation a reality. A generation after that, Paul Martin and Ken Dryden tried again.

This half-century of struggle is a testament to the difficulty and complexity of the task.

But this time, we're going to do it. This budget is the map and the trailhead.

There is agreement, across the political spectrum, that early learning and child care is the national economic policy we need now.

This is social infrastructure that will drive jobs and growth. This is feminist economic policy. This is smart economic policy. That is why this budget commits up to \$30 billion over five years, reaching \$8.3 billion every year, permanently, to build a high-quality, affordable and accessible early learning and child care system across Canada.

This is not an effort that will deliver instant gratification. We are building something that, of necessity, must be constructed collaboratively, and for the long-term.

But I have confidence in us. I have confidence that we are a country that believes in investing in our future; in our children; and in our young parents. Here is our goal : Five years from now, parents across the country should have access to high quality early learning and child care, for an average of \$10 a day.

I make this promise to Canadians today, speaking as your Finance Minister and as a working mother: We will get it done.

In making this historic commitment, I want to thank the visionary leaders of Quebec, particularly Quebec's feminists, who have shown the rest of Canada the way forward.

This plan will, of course, also provide additional resources to Quebec, which might well use them to further support an early learning and child care system that is already the envy of the rest of Canada, and indeed, much of the world

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