

Election 2021: Party platforms ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access summary online ^[2]

Access "what child care advocates want" online ^[3]

Four of the five main federal parties are fielding candidates across Canada in the election now underway. We have studied their platforms and analysed their announcements. So far, this is where they stand on early learning and child care.

Liberals

In its 2021 federal budget, the Liberal federal government allocated \$34 billion for early learning and child care, including Indigenous early learning and child care, over the next five years, and a minimum of \$9.2 billion annually after 2025-26. The budget said the government would negotiate five-year agreements with provincial and territorial governments to reduce average parent fees for regulated child care by 50 per cent by the end of 2022, and to bring down fees to an average of \$10 a day by 2025-26. The budget said the funding agreements would also provide for a major expansion of regulated child care for children 0-12 primarily in the not-for-profit and public sectors. As well, the agreements would include measures to increase the number of qualified early childhood educators, including an increase in the wages of those employed in the regulated child care sector. The budget also said provinces and territories would be required to collect data and make it public so that progress can be measured. The Liberal budget promised federal child care legislation to "enshrine principles of a Canada-wide child care system in law."

At the time of the election call, the federal government had secured early learning and child care agreements with seven provinces and the Yukon Territory. Each agreement meets or exceeds the parent fee targets set out in the federal budget. As well, the agreements signed to date will create a minimum of 145,000 new regulated child care spaces over the next five years for children under the age of 6 (under the age of 7 in the case of Manitoba). Each agreement provides for better wages for early childhood educators and other initiatives to improve retention and recruitment of staff.

During the election period, the Liberal Party of Canada has reconfirmed the above 2021 budget commitments and says its plan will create 250,000 new spaces and support the hiring of 40,000 new early childhood educators over the next five years.

New Democrats

Canada's NDP's platform says its vision is that every parent across Canada should be able to find affordable child care that they need when they need it and that child care should be from a "licensed provider making a fair wage." The NDP says it will "work with other levels of government, Indigenous communities, families and child care workers to ensure that care is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all Canadian children." It will introduce legislation that enshrines a federal commitment to "high-quality public child care in law."

Although the platform does not detail policies for achieving its vision, it does commit to protecting existing child care spaces and to creating more. It promises to "take immediate action to "save not-for-profit child care centres that are at risk of closure with relief funding to re-open spaces that were lost during COVID-19." From there, the NDP promises to "immediately work with the provinces to build a universal, \$10 a day child care system," "create enough spaces so families don't spend months on wait lists, and ensure that child care workers are paid a fair, living wage."

Conservatives

When Conservative leader Erin O'Toole unveiled his Party's platform, he said a Conservative government will cancel the Liberal federal government's child care plan. Instead of building a Canada-wide system of early learning and child care, creating new regulated spaces, bringing down fees to \$10 a day, and improving the wages and working conditions of early childhood educators, the Conservatives propose to introduce a refundable tax credit and at the same time eliminate the existing federal child care expense tax deduction. The existing federal child care expense deduction allows all parents to deduct from their taxable income a portion of their child care costs. The Conservatives' proposed refundable tax credit would be much less generous than the \$10 a day plan and would leave licensed child care

unaffordable for most families. Depending on family income, families would be able to receive a portion of their child care costs up to a maximum of \$6,000, although very few families will qualify for the full amount. Of course, child care is typically much more expensive than even the maximum O'Toole tax credit, so families receiving the tax credit will still have a large burden of child care expenses acting as a major barrier to women's employment.

Greens

The Green Party of Canada has yet to announce where it stands on child care in this election. However, it has previously **stated** ^[4] that "universal childcare and early childhood education are crucial components in developing comprehensive care for all Canadians" and that "it is time for federally funded and mandated programs."

Region: Canada ^[5]

Tags: federal election 2021 ^[6]

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