

National childcare plan great for women, society ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

My grandfather, may he rest in peace, was a bit of a practical joker and also a lifelong true blue Progressive Conservative. One of his legendary pranks was placing a Pierre Trudeau sticker on his sister's car. (His sister was also a lifelong conservative and active in the local party.) This joke was recounted for decades, and I made sure to include it when I delivered his eulogy.

I was thinking about that story recently as my son and wife were removing a certain Trudeau-themed sticker — popular amongst the illegal occupation folks — from a used car he had just bought. Now, I might not want to make love to Trudeau, like the last owner of that car, but I do have to give the current government credit on one file: the national daycare program.

The federal government has managed to negotiate a deal with all three territories and nine of the 10 provinces over the last year. Anyone who follows federal-provincial relations will recognize that striking a deal with 12 out of 13 jurisdictions — represented by very different political parties with strikingly different ideologies — is no small feat.

The child-care plan was arguably the key feature of deputy prime minister and finance minister Chystia Freeland's 2021 budget. The plan is to provide eligible Canadian parents with \$10-a-day regulated child-care spaces for children under six years old, within the next five years to reduce current rates by half by the end of this year.

The five-year, \$30-billion plan might seem like a rather large social policy spend, but this plan is as much an economic policy as it is a social benefit. Data from Quebec and jurisdictions around the world prove that it will be, in time, a net benefit to the economy. Not only will the investment result in a 1.2 per cent increase in our gross domestic product over the next two decades, but there will also be an increase in people, especially mothers, participating in the paid workforce. This means more tax revenue. By the fifth year of the program, the average eligible Ontario family will save more than \$9,000 per child which can be spent elsewhere in the economy.

Of course, that is still hypothetical in Ontario as it is the only province that has not yet inked a deal. But most pundits predict that a deal will arrive closer to the next provincial election.

And that Ontario deal can't come fast enough. Such a program was suggested by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women all the way back in 1970. After years of studies and special reports, there is finally a national plan that allows mothers to participate in the workforce should they so choose. And that will be good news for all of us, especially women.

So no matter what sticker may be on your car, the national child-care program proves that great things can happen when we all work together.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: national child care system ^[4]

child care expansion ^[5]

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