

# Opinion: National child-care program is necessary for Canada's economic growth <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## Excerpts

When all parties in the House of Commons unanimously supported the Early Learning and Childcare Act, they voted in favour of Canadian families, working women and – most importantly – a strong Canadian economy.

While some recently argued that the federal child-care program has not significantly increased women's participation in the economy, this claim is only true when considering the participation rate of all women ages 25-54.

In contrast, one of The Prosperity Project's Partners, TD, shared last June in their TD Economics report that the labour force participation rate of women with children under the age of six – the primary beneficiaries of the child-care program – has increased exponentially since the pandemic. This increase is attributed to both flexible work and child care. TD specifically notes that "child care is an area where policy can and does have a significant impact."

The fact that there is such a high demand for child care – which has led to a major shortage of available spaces – underscores the success and necessity of the program. Building infrastructure to support a national program of this magnitude takes time, but that doesn't mean the program should be rolled back.

Succeeding in such an effort will require a flexible, strategic and measured approach to collaborating with provinces and territories. Governments must work together to significantly accelerate expansion to reap the greatest benefits. The program also needs to be more closely monitored in order to fix issues as they arise.

Governments have primarily focused on lowering fees rather than developing funding models for expansion. We urge governments at all levels to shift their focus to this critical task immediately. Of course, this must be coupled with a workforce strategy, as expansion is simply impossible without more educators. Therefore, any funding model must include a wage grid that offers wage increases that are significant enough to attract and retain workers.

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If we can look across party lines and overcome traditional federal/provincial stumbling blocks, the future success of easily accessible, affordable and quality child care could be achieved. Doing so will not only drive equal participation of women in the labour force, but also foster prosperity for all – something everyone should be able to agree on.

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

**Tags:** system building <sup>[4]</sup>

universal child care <sup>[5]</sup>

women's labour force participation <sup>[6]</sup>

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