

Media Release: Child care advocates applaud federal budget action to expand child care availability ^[1]

Author: Child Care Now

Source: Child Care Now

Format: Article

Publication Date: 28 Mar 2024

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

The announcement today of a new \$1 billion federal child care expansion loan program, and \$60 million in grants, to support the construction of new low-fee public and not-for-profit licensed child care spaces is very welcome news, said Child Care Now, Canada's national child care advocacy association.

"The new fund is a very effective, direct and efficient mechanism for the federal government to accelerate the supply of affordable child care for young children," says Morna Ballantyne, Executive Director of Child Care Now.

"It will go a long way to solving the problems not-for-profit providers have when they try to secure financing to expand existing facilities or build new ones," she explained.

"Also by delivering the loan and grant program through the CMHC, the federal government is using an existing crown corporation to directly support those ready and able to build, and it provides the opportunity to make sure child care is coordinated with the important housing initiatives underway," she added.

Ballantyne said the pre-budget announcement shows the federal government recognizes the critical importance of expanding low fee high quality early learning and child care to those who have not been able to access it because of space limitations.

"The federal government's early learning and child care program is enormously popular and tens of thousands of parents are on wait lists to join," said Ballantyne. "It is a relief that the federal government recognizes the problem and is taking direct action to address it."

Child Care Now also welcomed the federal government's announcement of a further federal investment to increase the number of qualified early childhood educators, including \$10 million over two years for training initiatives, and a student loan forgiveness for graduates of early childhood education programs who choose to work in smaller, rural, Northern and remote communities.

"We are glad the federal government understands that expansion of the child care sector must go hand-in-hand with expansion of the child care workforce," said Ballantyne. "But we want to see in the next federal budget a stronger funding commitment for a comprehensive federal/provincial/territorial recruitment and retention strategy that addresses fair wages, pensions and working conditions," said Ballantyne.

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