

# Liberal budget hits a home run on housing, but plays small ball on care economy <sup>[1]</sup>

Budget 2024, writes Armine Yalnizyan, earmarks billions for the Liberal's Housing Plan, the most comprehensive policies Canada has seen since the Second World War.

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## AVAILABILITY

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

## Excerpt

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Preventing erosion of capacity and siphoning of wealth is a big concern in the care economy too, which is also in the crosshairs of private equity. In provinces like Ontario and around the world, private equity is scooping up small profitable providers, squeezing profits from public funding by lowering staffing levels and lobbying for less qualified staff to lower labour costs. These owners also charge operators more for rent and supplies, then lobby for higher public subsidies and fees. This can and must be stopped.

In politics, not everything can be a home run. All governments will be hard-pressed to avoid the accelerating dysfunction in health care, long-term care, and child-care. Beyond more funding, the federal government can adopt small ball strategies to methodically advance a humane agenda, moving players around the bases slowly and strategically. Here are three ways federal small ball could deliver big results without big spends in the coming months:

**Child care Workforce Deals:** Round two of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Childcare Agreements are now being negotiated, with a focus on workforce attraction and retention. Funds for these deals are already baked into the budget. The new agreements need enforceable requirements for staffing levels, qualifications of staff, wage grids commensurate with training, and pensions. Such rules could pay big dividends for frustrated parents who can see existing child care spaces not available because of staff shortages and massive turnover.

**Private Equity:** Build on the Housing Plan statement that "the role of private equity in our housing market needs to be addressed." The federal government should be tracking trends in the investments occurring in our long-term care, child care and health-care sectors, following the U.S., U.K., Australia, Europe and the Nordic countries, who are all examining ways of putting new guardrails on public funding.

**Community Benefits Agreements:** Care services such as child care, long-term care, medical or dental community clinics can be a built-in feature of new housing and infrastructure developments. Vancouver has led the way in such initiatives, increasing access to care while shielding non-profit providers from future rent hikes within for-profit buildings. Every federal dollar should do double duty like this wherever possible.

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

**Tags:** care economy <sup>[4]</sup>

federal funding <sup>[5]</sup>

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[https://www.thestar.com/business/opinion/liberal-budget-hits-a-home-run-on-housing-but-plays-small-ball-on-care-economy/article\\_62487bca-fb55-11ee-8761-b36dec2130dd.html?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_campaign=user-share](https://www.thestar.com/business/opinion/liberal-budget-hits-a-home-run-on-housing-but-plays-small-ball-on-care-economy/article_62487bca-fb55-11ee-8761-b36dec2130dd.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=user-share) <sup>[3]</sup>

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