

Thousands fail to apply for child care benefit [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Tens of thousands of Canadian families with young children risk not receiving cheques this July when the government's new Universal Child Care Benefit program goes into effect.

Only days before the program starts July 1, parents of an estimated 124,000 children have not applied for the \$100-a-month cheques. Moreover, outside of a notice on a government website, Ottawa appears to have made little effort to let thousands of Canadian families know they won't get the cheques if they don't apply.

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Those currently receiving the Canada Child Tax Benefit or who have applied for it and are in the Canada Revenue Agency's database covering about 1.9 million children will automatically receive the cheques when the program goes into effect. The \$100-a-month cheques are expected to go out July 20.

However, there are an estimated 200,000 children whose parents are not receiving the Child Tax Benefit, says Ariane Boyer, spokeswoman for the Canada Revenue Agency. In many cases, it may be because they don't qualify for the benefit which is pegged to family income.

Those families are entitled to the new Universal Child Care Benefit, but because they are not already in the database, they must apply for it, and the parents of only 76,000 children have filed applications with the revenue agency, said Boyer.

Ironically, the program was put in place so fast that parents have to use the form to apply for the Canada Child Tax Benefit even though they don't qualify for that program.

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However, the law also provides for the government to make payments retroactively for up to 11 months afterwards, she said, meaning families who apply late will eventually get their cheques as long as they don't apply more than 11 months late.

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Stephanie Vallon, spokesman for HRSD said an advertising campaign is planned in addition to the websites and information available through the government's 1-800 number to let people know what they have to do to apply but the budget cannot be revealed because the department is still negotiating the contract.

Lisa Murray, director of communications for Human Resources and Social Development Minister Diane Finley, downplayed the problems implementing the program. While she acknowledged that some families eligible for the cheques will not receive them right away because they haven't applied, she said they only represent a small percentage of the total number of families who will benefit under the program.

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Murray said the government will make efforts in coming weeks to reach out to those who haven't registered. Among the people the government suspects may not have registered for the benefit are those who have difficulty communicating in English or French.

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- reprinted from the CanWest News

Region: Canada ^[2]

Tags: federal programs ^[3]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/06/06/thousands-fail-apply-child-care-benefit-ca> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-programs>