

Canadians pick Liberal child-care plan over Tory \$1,200 cheques: poll [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A majority of Canadians favour Liberal over Conservative plans for dealing with what they say is a serious lack of affordable child care, suggests a new poll commissioned by a child-care advocacy group.

Fifty per cent of respondents preferred a national, accessible early learning system as promised by the former government, says the Environics Research survey. That compares with 35 per cent who favoured the \$1,200-a-year family allowance proposed by the Conservatives for each child under age six.

"A very strong majority believes government has an important role to support families in accessing high-quality child care," says Monica Lysack, executive director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, which commissioned the poll.

...

Social Development Minister Diane Finley counters that the Tory plan offers "the best of both worlds.

"What we're doing is creating 125,000 new spaces and giving the \$1,200."

Critics discount that claim because it's based on a strategy of tax incentives to urge businesses to open child-care centres. They note that similar efforts have failed in the past because no funding was provided to offset prohibitive operating costs.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has conceded that the \$250-million tax incentive plan "is not perfect."

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Just over 2,000 Canadians were asked the following question in a telephone poll between May 5 and 10.

"The new Conservative government has announced as one of its major platforms a new child-care plan that will provide parents with a \$1,200 per year allowance for each child under six to help them pay for child care. This plan will replace the national early learning and child care system announced by the previous government, which was to provide provincial funding to create 100,000 new affordable child care spaces. Which one of these two plans for child care do you think the government should implement?"

Support for a national child-care system was high across Canada, in urban and rural areas and among families with a stay-at-home parent, said Derek Leebosh, senior associate with Environics.

"It shows that Canadians put a very high value on child care. They think it's important that it be available and accessible."

A solid majority of those polled questioned why there can't be a family allowance and an improved child-care network, he said.

"A lot of Canadians feel like maybe they're being forced to make a bit of false choice. Why can't we have both? There's huge surpluses. It's not like we're in a deficit.

"They don't want to see (the \$1,200 cheques) come at the expense of funding of affordable child-care programs."

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The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

- reprinted from the Canadian Press

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