

Has child care finally become the nation's business? [CA]^[1]

Author: Binks, Georgie

Source: CBC News-Viewpoint

Format: Article

Publication Date: 3 Jun 2004

AVAILABILITY

Article also available in html on the CBC website ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Years ago, I knew a divorced man who had custody of two of his children. They were twins, eight years old at the time. Every morning he had to be at work at four a.m. So the twins got themselves up, dressed as best they could and trudged off to school. They had no option. Their Dad wouldn't have been able to work otherwise. He tells me, "I had their lunches made and I would phone them to wake them up. One of my sons was okay with it, but the other had a difficult time."

So when I look at the different platforms of the politicians I wonder if any of the promises about child care would have helped this man and his kids.

To the day-care mavens, these are the complicated issues. Right now they are applauding the fact that the simple ones may finally be addressed. Martha Friendly, co-ordinator of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit at the University of Toronto, says, "I'm very pleased that all of the parties including the Conservatives have child care in their platform, even though I don't agree with their (the Conservatives') position. If you look at the other four parties, they have quite forward-looking positions. The Bloc supports child care, the NDP has always supported universal child care, and the Liberal platform has good detail."

Here's what they are promising. The Green Party says it is committed to developing a national child-care strategy & one that includes non-profit, professional day care, increased support for at-home parents and a greater focus on family education, health and basic nutrition.

The NDP is next with a promise "to provide stable, long-term federal funds to create an additional 200,000 high quality, affordable, publicly-funded child-care spaces within four years."

While the Bloc Quebecois has its heart in the right place as far as child care goes. By virtue of its other policies its not looking at a national program. It wants to "ensure that Ottawa transfers \$630 million that will allow the Quebec government to put in place a universal parental leave program."

On June 3, 2004 the Liberals unveiled their plan promising a \$5 billion Quebec-style national child-care system that would create 250,000 licensed child-care spaces by 2009. Leader Paul Martin says the bureaucratic obstacles that prevented a promised day-care system in the mid-1990s have been removed.

Hmmmm. I feel that the Liberals simply waited to see what everyone else had on their plate and upped the best offer by 50,000. Kind of like a child-care poker game.

Finally, Conservative leader Stephen Harper says that rather than boost spending on institutional day care, his party would offer tax breaks to families with children, no matter how they are raised. Unfortunately those tax breaks couldn't be used in more licensed spaces, because they wouldn't be creating more licensed spaces.

The sad thing is that his party wants to tighten child pornography laws and some members want to offer "counselling" to women considering having an abortion, but creating child care spaces & something that could actually make a difference in the lives of children and their parents & isn't even on the map.

The issue isn't simply child care. It's also about enhancing the experience of children. Friendly says she thinks public sentiment has changed so that it isn't just about a place to put children while Mom works, it's about child development. "Women are in the work force, they don't want to go back home and financially they won't. But it really does matter where children are when their mothers are working. It's good for kids to be in early childhood programs," she says. Many stay-at-home mothers have their children in nursery school or preschool programs by the time they are three years old. Probably the best way to look at it is simply education expanded to reach younger minds.

Since women started pouring into the workforce in the early '70s, it's been evident to people with children that child care is a necessity. But for a long time critics argued that if people wanted to have children it was their job to take care of them & that it simply wasn't an issue for society. It seems as if we needed to go through an entire generation of children for society to realize that, in fact, child care was important. People who now wipe their brows, thankful that their children are grown and they don't have the worry and expense of child

care, are well aware that other people's children deserve something better.

Child care isn't just a big city issue. The concern about child care and what politicians are going to do about it is something that hits parents across the country. For instance, a mother in New Brunswick writes to the local paper complaining about her difficulties in finding a place for her sons in licensed day care. In Yukon, Jasbir Randhawa, the president of the Yukon Child Care Association, invited election candidates to their annual meeting to discuss child care just days ago. The NDP and Liberal candidates showed up. Randhawa says, "Right now the NDP talks about actually doing something, but it is difficult to take the Liberals seriously when they have been in power for so long. How long can people wait? How long can children wait? They are growing up."

As every parent can tell you, you have to learn how to walk before you run. The same is true for day care in Canada. It's just sad it's taken so long for Canada to learn how to walk. Let's just hope the government that is elected this time decides to start walking instead of simply sitting on its behind, like a lazy toddler.

- reprinted from the CBC News-Viewpoint

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: election ^[4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/04/06/has-child-care-finally-become-nations-business-ca>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/04/06/has-child-care-finally-become-nations-business-ca> [2]

https://www.cbc.ca/news/viewpoint/vp_binks/20040603.html [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/election>