

Impact of the National Child Benefit boost [CA] ^[1]

Source: The House, CBC Radio

Format: Article

Publication Date: 22 Feb 2003

AVAILABILITY

See transcript below.

EXCERPTS

ANTHONY GERMAIN: A key focus of the budget is help for low-income families with a boost to the national child benefit and close to \$2 billion for child care. Anti-poverty advocates say it's a fraction of what's needed. And as Margo Kelly reports, critics complain the immediate infusion of child care cash is so small it won't help the thousands of families still waiting for a spot for their children.

BARTRAW: If I had to pay a babysitter, the majority of the time the wages that I was making was going out for child care. So it really discouraged me. And it was to the point that one time that I felt like OK, maybe I'm better off by going on social assistance because you would receive more.

KELLY: Last year she was stunned to get an offer of help.

BARTRAW: I got a call stating that I was eligible for daycare, which I don't need now. So it really ticked me off.

MANLEY: Today, as a result of the work of the Minister of Human Resources Development, I'm announcing a new federal investment of \$935 million in child care over the next five years.

KELLY: The Liberals are clearly trying to score political points with the child care investment. In the days leading up to the budget, both John Manley and Jane Stewart visited daycares with gaggles of reporters and cameras. Initially child care advocates hailed the announcement as a historic moment, the closest Ottawa has ever come to establishing a national child care program. But after reading the budget fine print, advocates felt they'd been bamboozled. Martha Friendly, a child care researcher at the University of Toronto, says that's because only a hundred of the \$900 million will be spent in the first two years.

MARTHA FRIENDLY: And I don't understand what that's all about. If it's important, if we're a northern tiger and our economy is booming and there's a surplus, and for the first time the provinces, I mean except Ontario, really seem to be on board, I don't understand why it was only \$25 million in the first year and only \$75 million in the second year, and the other \$800 million is downloaded to the end. So what if the economy goes belly-up? We will have a federal election by that time. Anything can happen.

KELLY: Advocates worry there won't be much real building of the child care system over the next two years, and popular daycares like this one, Sprockets in midtown Toronto, will continue to be besieged with requests from desperate parents.

MAUREEN MYERS: This is our wait list. It's a huge binder, and it gets bigger every day.

KELLY: The centre's director, Maureen Myers, says over the past few years 2000 subsidized daycare spots have been lost in the city due to provincial budget cuts. Eligibility rules for subsidies have been tightened dramatically, and even those willing to pay up to \$1200 a month for a spot face a challenge.

MYERS: We're booked right up to January 2004 with requests for child care, for children who are just being born and children who aren't even born yet.

KELLY: David Rhodes arrives to pick up his two children, and recalls vividly the scramble he and his wife went through.

DAVID RHODES: And we started looking for a spot basically when my wife was about four months pregnant. And once we had the baby, and Peggy had been off for about six months, we still weren't in a spot. So it is the most stressful thing we've gone through.

KELLY: A spot came up at Sprockets just two weeks before Peggy was due to return to work. A lifesaver, but at a huge cost. The couple pay more for daycare than their mortgage.

RHODES: Like, I keep telling the guys at our Montreal agency, and they'd be... they'd tell me how low they were spending. They couldn't believe the strain that we go through to make daycare payments here.

KELLY: Martine Doucette tries to coax her daughter Oceane out of the playroom of her daycare in downtown Montreal. She says Quebec's five-dollar-a-day child care program turned her life around. As a single mom, paying a babysitter meant she could only work part-time until she got her daughter into a daycare.

MARTINE DOUCETTE: It's a been a great, great difference for me. I have time to work, I have time to do things, and I couldn't afford

anything else.

KELLY: Quebec now spends a billion dollars a year on daycare, almost 60 percent of the total all governments spend on child care across the country. And there are still waiting lists. The federal government is hoping its new investment in child care will encourage other provinces to invest more, but by only putting a hundred million dollars on the table over the next two years, critics say that prospect is unlikely.

KELLY: This week's \$2 billion investment won't come close to meeting past political promises. Parliament's resolution in 1989 to end child poverty by the year 2000, or the Liberals' Red Book boast in the early 1990s of a national child care program. Still, Iris Bartraw is grateful and optimistic.

BARTRAW: It's a first step. There's a lot further to go, but... and it might take a long time, but at least it's a start, which is absolutely wonderful.

- reprinted from the CBC transcript

Region: Canada ^[2]

Tags: budget ^[3]

family resource programs ^[4]

federal programs ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/03/04/impact-national-child-benefit-boost-ca>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/03/04/impact-national-child-benefit-boost-ca> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/budget> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/family-resource-programs> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-programs>