

Child care as an economic issue [CA-NB]^[1]

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EXCERPTS

As we approach March 8, International Women's Day, and we think about the status of women, it is interesting to note that one of the longest standing issues still raised by women — child care services — is finally being recognized as a children's rights issue, a family issue and an economic issue. Women are the ones most directly affected — after the children themselves — by any problems with child care access and quality, so women are still the main ones working to improve child care services, let alone deliver them.

But smart economic development agencies, economists and municipalities are also taking up the cause. They say that we cannot afford not to invest in child care.

...

Economists have looked at what it would cost if all mothers with young children decided to leave the labour market. Employment in New Brunswick would shrink by about seven per cent — at a gigantic cost to the New Brunswick economy. Child care centers are key to job skills and productivity.

Canada is losing ground in that area. Countries who invest the most in early childhood development rank ahead of Canada in overall competitiveness. Most children in New Brunswick receive some kind of child care services. Only a fraction of that care is inspected and licensed and benefits from supports.

The first years of life are crucial to the future success of individuals — it sets the foundation for life-long learning. Children need to be surrounded by opportunities to thrive and develop, not just once they enter school, but when they are in child care. Our child care services must be of high quality.

...

New Brunswick is making some improvements in child care services — implementing age-appropriate content, supplementing the salaries of workers — but more federal dollars are needed in order to create a real network of flexible quality services in a province as rural as we are, and where parents' ability to pay higher fees is so limited.

Families need more attention paid to them in other ways. If maternity and parental leaves and benefits were improved, more parents could stay longer with their newborn or newly adopted child. A healthy work-family balance for men and for women requires changes in the culture in our workplaces and in our employment standards. Maybe then more families will be able to have the number of children they really want and more children will be surrounded by quality care, by parents and by child care workers.

- reprinted from the Miramichi Leader

Region: New Brunswick^[2]

Tags: economics^[3]

gender^[4]

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