

Happy birthday UCCB: What can we show for the past 4 years? ^[1]

An open letter to the leaders of Canada's political parties from the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and Campaign 2000

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An open letter to the leaders of Canada's political parties from the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and Campaign 2000

To: The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Official Opposition Jack Layton, Leader, New Democratic Party of Canada Gilles Duceppe, Leader, Bloc Quebecois Elizabeth May, Leader, Green Party of Canada

This week marks the 4th anniversary of the introduction of the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB), a \$100/monthly payment for children under six with the stated goal of helping Canadians "balance work and family by supporting their child care choices". To date, between \$7 and \$8 billion in public dollars have been spent on this program and there is little to show for it.

Four years later, Canadian families are no better able to balance work and family than they were in 2006. Finding good quality affordable child care is as elusive as ever for parents. Expansion of child care has slowed, with spaces for only 20% of three to five year olds if parents can afford the fees which range from \$600-\$1,200 month. Modest and low income families, Aboriginal and rural families, parents of infants and children with disabilities are especially excluded.

Four years later, despite the sizeable public expenditure on the UCCB, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) continues to rank Canada's child care situation as one of the worst of its 30 member countries. Yet, there has been no public, performance-based evaluation of how the UCCB funds are used or whether they in fact "help Canadians balance work and family".

Our organizations have long advocated for public investment in a universal system of high quality early childhood education and child care services, accompanied by an effective national child benefit that lifts families out of poverty. Four years later, it is clear that the UCCB has abysmally failed to solve either the child care crisis or child and family poverty in Canada.

What's the solution? Across Canada, a broad consensus that transcends partisan politics, regions, age, income, ethnic and racial groups confirms the need for federal funding to build a child care system. Indeed, the December 2009 report of the all-party federal Standing Committee on Finance recommends that the federal government "... implement a national child care plan providing high-quality, affordable and inclusive child care services." This goal should be achieved through federal transfer payments to participating provinces and territories, and the plan should include measurable targets and timelines.

Today we are writing to urge all of you to "go for the gold" for Canada's children. We are seeking a public commitment from each of you on behalf of your parties to fund a national early childhood education and child care program in Budget 2010 and beyond. This strategy will meet policy objective of choice in child care and work-family balance.

Yours truly,

Jody Dallaire, President Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

Laurel Rothman, National Coordinator Campaign 2000

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Region: Canada ^[3]

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