

# Conservatives draw fire over comment on child care <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Susan Delacourt

**Source:** Toronto Star

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 3 Feb 2011

## EXCERPTS

Human Resources Minister Diane Finley has accused the Liberals of wanting to revive a national child-care program so that parents don't have to raise their own children.

"It's the Liberals who wanted to ensure that parents are forced to have other people raise their children. We do not believe in that," Finley said in the Commons Thursday, the same day that Liberals were promising to revive the national program scrapped by the Conservatives five years ago this week.

Liberals are calling Finley's remark an insult to working Canadian mothers and fathers and a clear declaration of bias in favour of stay-at-home parents - a rarity in Canada, where most mothers with children work.

"For decades we've realized that women are working, men are working and the second thing we've realized is that there's a great benefit to children from working and playing with others and learning with others," said Liberal MP Bob Rae. "The notion somehow that child care is some form of alien abduction is just completely preposterous."

New Democrats, who have put forward their own national child-care legislation in the Commons, were also outraged by Finley's characterization of child-care programs.

"Finley insulted all teachers, all early childhood educators, child-care workers, organizers of parents' resource centres and even babysitters. She is trying to inflict guilt on all working parents - a truly shameful, divisive behaviour," said NDP MP Olivia Chow.

According to Statistics Canada's 2007 labour-force review, 69 per cent of mothers with children under 2 are in the workforce. That figure rises to 84 per cent for mothers with children between 6 and 15 years of age.

Child-care expert Martha Friendly said Finley's remarks reflect a view out of sync with modern-day reality. "I'm stunned to hear a government official say this in the 21st century," said Friendly, who is executive director of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit. "The view that women who work 'give their kids to someone else to be raised' is an astonishing one. I'm sure that hardworking mothers and fathers who are employed believe they're raising their own children and are just hoping for some support to help them do so."

Finley did go on to say in the Commons that Conservatives support whatever choice parents make for their children's care and her spokesman, Ryan Sparrow, said the government was in favour of direct aid to parents, not the "bureaucracy" of a national program.

In an email to the Star, Sparrow said: "Unlike the Liberals, our Conservative government believes that parents know best how to raise their own children." The government now spends about \$2.5 billion annually to give direct payments to about 2 million Canadian children, through their parents, Sparrow said.

The whole revival of the child-care debate - a central issue of the 2005-6 election campaign - appeared to be set off by the Liberals' announced promises on Thursday to bring back the program that the Conservatives formally scrapped five years ago.

Ken Dryden, the former Liberal cabinet minister who put the defunct child-care system in place, promised the program would return if his party comes back to power. But he also said that any new version will be more modest than the old one - at least initially.

"It is our intention to proceed as we did before in terms of the creation of a national, early learning and child-care program," Dryden told a news conference. "We have to be respectful of the existing circumstances. The state of the economy is not what it was five years ago, or seven years ago when we started in on this."

...

-reprinted from the Toronto Star

**Region:** Canada <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** election <sup>[3]</sup>

public opinion <sup>[4]</sup>

demographics <sup>[5]</sup>

federal programs <sup>[6]</sup>

mother's labour force participation <sup>[7]</sup>

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/11/02/conservatives-draw-fire-over-comment-child-care>  
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/11/02/conservatives-draw-fire-over-comment-child-care> [2]  
<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/election> [4]  
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/public-opinion> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/demographics> [6]  
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-programs> [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8142>