

Youth Nation question of the day: Do you support the creation of a national strategy for childcare? ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Question: Many young people are struggling to raise children while at the same time study at college or university. For some, the lack of affordable childcare makes it impossible to even consider going to school. Do you support the creation of a national strategy for childcare and if yes, how would this strategy look?

- *Sandy Hudson* ^[2], 25, chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario

Candidates' answers:

Larissa Shasko, 29, Green Party candidate, Palliser:

I know many young parents who want to pursue post-secondary studies but do not have access to child care, due to both lack of child care spaces and the incredibly high cost of child care. In Saskatchewan, the lack of affordable quality child care is at a crisis point. There are incredible benefits to families, the economy, and the future health of our society by having good quality accessible child care universally available.

From talking to students at the University of Regina, I know that universities that offer on-site child care run out of spaces quickly and waiting lists are long. Green MPs will work to change that.

Canadian families need access to affordable, high-quality child care as an aspect of early childhood education. This includes single parents and couples who are in the workforce as well as parents who are pursuing post-secondary studies. There are clear benefits to maximizing time together for parents with young children. Canadians want a program with flexibility. A cheque for \$100/month does not begin to address these needs.

The Greens are committed to a high-quality federally-funded child care program in Canada, accessible to any family that wants to place children into early childhood education. Workplace and post-secondary on-site child care has been shown to improve productivity, decrease absenteeism, ensure quality care for children (because parents can "drop in" at any time to see their young children), and permits longer breast-feeding of infants. Onsite child care spaces for workers and students create other benefits. Emerging literature recognizes that children benefit enormously from time with their mothers, especially when very young.

The beneficent spiral of providing on-site child care for post-secondary students and at workplaces also includes making it easier to use mass transit. When parents and children travel to the same destination, the trip can often be made in less time on public transit, enabling parents to spend more time with children.

As MP, I will work to create a universally accessible and affordable child care program in Canada. I will work to specifically ensure that Canada's universal child care program provides on-site child care at all post-secondary education centres in Canada, with adequate spaces and affordable rates, as well as workplace child care spaces wherever possible.

Green MPs will also create a national Children's Commissioner, as recommended by UNICEF, to ensure children's best interests are considered in policy development and that services across the country are better coordinated.

William Molls, 23, NDP candidate, St. Paul's:

This is an excellent question. We shouldn't be forcing our young people to choose between raising a family and getting an education. It's worth mentioning that rising tuition fees are forcing students more and more to make these difficult choices. As a young person and a recent graduate of Ryerson University, I understand the crushing financial burden of paying for post-secondary education today. That's why New Democrats in the next House of Commons will designate an \$800 million transfer to the provinces and territories to combat the rising cost of tuition, and to help make post-secondary education more affordable.

The other parties have a long list of broken promises when it comes to delivering on child care. In 1993 we were promise 150,000 new child care spaces by the Liberal government. Over the 13 years that they were in power, they failed to deliver on that promise. Since the Conservatives took power, they implemented a "Universal Child Care Benefit" - a measly tax credit that has not been nearly enough to make a difference for young parents. The New Democrats that you send to the next House of Commons will establish a Canada-wide child care and early learning program, with the goal of 25,000 new, affordable child care spaces over the next four years. We will also work towards the creation of early learning and education community centres that will give parents a "one-stop shop" for family services.

What's clear is that we need to deliver on our commitments to young parents looking to further their education. New Democrats have a record of turning corporate tax giveaways into money for our post-secondary institutions, and making life more affordable for young families, through working with the other parties and keeping them honest.

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[no other parties provided answers to this question]

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[2] https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2011/04/01/meet_the_youth_nation_panel.html

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