

Missing pieces in Budget 2012 ^[1]

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Excerpts:

The theme of Budget 2012 is economic prosperity. Investing in our youngest citizens today is as important for economic prosperity and intergenerational fairness as reviewing old age assistance. Developing the full potential of every child needs more attention across Canada. There is undeniable evidence that failing to do so limits productivity and creates higher social costs. This focus is missing in Budget 2012.

Promises of progress on aboriginal education are a welcome and essential step. A second but missing essential step is preventing adolescents from falling through the cracks of a fragmented support system. A third essential piece is greater investment in early childhood, based on research showing that preparation for success as an adult starts early. More funding for a youth employment strategy helps, but it starts too late. Canada spends much less on early childhood development than comparable countries in our global economy.

Removing obstacles that prevent children from developing their full potential provides a good return on investment, as well as being the right thing to do. It is time for a pan-Canadian framework for child and youth development, similar to the budget's call for a pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications, which also crosses provincial jurisdictions.

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Children and the Social Transfer

There is no change in policies that transfer resources to families. Without debate or explanation, the budget confirms that federal tax revenues to fund social programs, including programs for children, will be transferred to the provinces without any form of accountability for the use of those funds. There is no mechanism to ensure that children are a priority, or that children, who are 25% of the Canadian population, will be treated equitably. The growing opportunity gap between children who grow up with many advantages and children with few resources requires special attention to ensure that every child in Canada gets a good start in life.

The CCRC proposes that benchmarks based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child be included in federal-provincial transfer agreements to ensure that public money is well spent and that our national obligations to all children are fulfilled.

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