

Seven years and \$15b gone: Nothing to show for the Universal Child Care Benefit ^[1]


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AVAILABILITY

Letter in pdf (English and French) ^[2]

Attachment	Size
 Feb 6 2013 statement Eng and French FINAL.pdf ^[3]	287.87 KB

Excerpts:

Seven years ago today, Stephen Harper's first act as Prime Minister-just three hours after taking office-was to cut Canada's first national child care program. This program would have created more high quality regulated child care, made child care more affordable for families across the country and been a first step to a real system.

The Prime Minister Harper replaced the program with the Universal Child Care Benefit, a \$100 /month cheque for children under age 6. Since then, \$15b has been spent on the UCCB while families across Canada struggle to find affordable high quality child care. Strong evidence about the benefits of quality early childhood education and care is being ignored. Meanwhile, many families make-do with unregulated care while for-profit child care-usually poorer quality than non-profit-is growing rapidly. Early childhood research, organizations and other infrastructure has been defunded and the disparities in early childhood provision for families in different regions continue to grow.

Canada again has been rebuked internationally for human rights failures on child care. A 2012 UN Committee noted the "high cost of child-care, lack of available places, the absence of uniform training requirements for all child-care staff and of standards of quality care ... despite the State party's significant resources".

Each year since 2006, the UCCB has cost taxpayers (including cash-strapped young families who can't access child care) \$2.5 billion annually. Yet there is no information about what this \$15b public expenditure has accomplished for Canadian families. The UCCB has not created a single child care space nor decreased fees. At a time of "fiscal restraint", this lack of public accountability or concern about value-for-public-dollars is-at best-irresponsible.

Some key facts:

- There are licensed child care spaces for less than 20% of 0-12 year olds (922,000 child care spaces, 4,700,000 0-12 year olds);
- Growth in spaces has slowed to the lowest rate in a decade yet Canada is experiencing a baby boom. The number of children in the 0-4 cohort has increased at the highest rate in 50 years - up 11% 2006 - 2011;
- The median child care fee for a two year old in Canada is now \$700 a month. In most of Canada, child care is not publicly funded, so programs must rely heavily on parent fees, which are usually too high for ordinary families;
- Fees vary hugely across regions. Quebec families pay \$154/month and Manitoba families \$431/month but the same toddler space can cost a family \$1600/month or more in some cities.

With this in mind, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada calls on all Members of the House of Commons-Opposition Parties and the Government of Canada-to act now to ensure that public funds are directed towards the services that children and families need:

1. Use the House of Commons apparatus to launch a public inquiry into the state of early childhood education and child care in Canada;
2. Urge the Office of the Auditor General of Canada to gather and publish objective, fact-based information to hold the federal government accountable for its stewardship of the public funds spent through the UCCB;
3. Reprofile the UCCB, sharing the funds between a national child care program and the National Child Benefit;
4. Reinstate, and further develop, the national child care program to expand services desperately needed by Canadian families.

Related link: [The state of early childhood education and care in Canada 2010: Trends and analysis](#) ^[4]

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