

Food banks side with NDP in debate over child care versus tax benefits ^[1]

Author: The Canadian Press

Source: Toronto Star ^[2]

Format: Article

Publication Date: 4 Nov 2014

EXCERPTS

Canadian food banks are wading into the hot political debate over how best the federal government can help families with kids: give them tax breaks, as the Conservatives are doing, or invest in regulated child care, as the NDP proposes.

In its annual HungerCount report, Food Banks Canada comes down squarely on the side of the NDP.

It says the use of food banks remains 25 per cent higher than it was before the devastating global recession in 2008 and that 37 per cent of those helped are children.

According to the report, almost half of the households helped are families with kids and nearly half of those are two-parent families.

Among other recommendations, the report says the federal government should replace "the current alphabet soup" of child tax benefits with a new child well-being benefit that targets the most vulnerable families.

And it calls on federal and provincial governments to invest in predictable, stable funding for affordable, regulated child care, enabling parents to enter or remain in the workforce.

The report comes just days after Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced new measures aimed at families, which include enhanced child benefits and income splitting - a measure economists say will benefit primarily wealthy couples with kids.

The Conservatives have said their plan will allow parents to choose what's best for their kids and have disparaged the NDP's proposal to invest \$5 billion a year to create one million, \$15-per-day child care spaces.

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